In Asoka's Footsteps

Dhamma in India, October 1999

Introduction.

We read in the "Dialogues of the Buddha" (Dīgha Nikāya II, 16, Mahā-Parinibbāna sutta, Ch V, 140) that the Buddha, in the night of his passing away, said to Ānanda:

The place, Ānanda, at which the believing man can say:— "Here the Tathāgata [1] was born!" is a spot to be visited with feelings of reverence.
The place, Ānanda, at which the believing man can say:— "Here the Tathāgata attained to the supreme and perfect insight!" is a spot to be visited with feelings of reverence.
The place, Ānanda, at which the believing man can say:— "Here was the kingdom of righteousness set on foot by the Tathāgata!" is a spot to be visited with feelings of reverence.
The place, Ānanda, at which the believing man can say:— "Here the Tathāgata passed finally away in the utter passing away which leaves nothing whatever to remain behind!" is a spot to be visited with feelings of reverence.
And there will come, Ānanda, to such spots, believers, monks and nuns of the Order, or devout men and women, and will say:— "Here was the Tathāgata born!" or, "Here did the Tathāgata attain to the supreme and perfect insight!" or, "Here was the kingdom of righteousness set on foot by the Tathāgata!" or, "Here the Tathāgata passed away in that utter passing away which leaves nothing whatever to remain behind!"
And they, Ānanda, who shall die while they, with believing heart, are journeying on such pilgrimage, shall be reborn after death, when the body shall dissolve, in the happy realms of heaven.

Some three hundred years after the Buddha's passing away, Asoka, the great king of the Mauryan Empire, in the twentyfirst year of his reign, in 249 B.C. , undertook a pilgrimage to all the holy places. Asoka was the third ruler of the first truly Indian Empire of the Mauryan dinasty which, at the end of Asoka's reign, stretched all the way from the Hindu Kush, in today's Afghanistan, in the West, to the Bay of Bengal in the East and from the Himalayans in the North to somewhere North of Madras in the South. The first years of his reign were reputedly harsh but after the conquest of the Kingdom of Kalinga, Asoka was filled with remorse and he proclaimed the

[1] Epithet of the Buddha, translated as "thus gone" or "thus come", the meaning of which will be explained further on in this book.

Law of Piety. It was at that time that he converted to a devoted Buddhist. From that time on he did not cease to inspire and exhort his subjects to apply the Dhamma. He governed his vast empire in accordance with the Buddha's teachings, as can still be witnessed by the numerous "rock edicts" which are preserved. A copy of one of them is placed at the entrance of the National Museum in New Delhi.

In the seventeenth year of his reign, under his patronage, the Third Council was held by Moggaliputta-Tissa [2]. During this Council the Buddhist teaching and the Sangha were firmly established. Shortly afterwards, Asoka sent his son [3] Mahinda to Sri Lanka and also missionaries to other countries to propagate the teachings.

In the so-called Indian Legends, a non-historical record of Asoka's reign, his pilgrimage to the holy places is described as follows [4]:

The Pilgrimage of Asoka.

Having erected the eighty-four thousand stupas, King Asoka expressed a desire to visit the holy places of his religion. By the advice of his counsellors he sent for the saint Upagupta [5], son of Gupta the perfumer. Upagupta had been in accordance with prophecy born a century after the death of the Buddha, and, when summoned by the king, was dwelling on Mount Urumunda in the Natabhatika forest near Mathurā.

The saint accepted the royal invitation, and, accompanied by eighteen thousand holy men, travelled in state by boat down the Jumna and Ganges to Pātaliputra, where he was received with the utmost reverence and honour.

The king said: "I desire to visit all the places where the venerable Buddha stayed, to do honour unto them, and to mark each with an enduring memorial for the instruction of the most remote posterity." The saint approved of the project, and undertook to act as guide. Escorted by a mighty army the monarch visited all the holy places in order.

The first place visited was the Lumbini Garden. Here Upagupta said: "In this spot, great king, the venerable One was born"; and added: "Here is the first monument consecrated in honour of the Buddha, the sight of whom is excellent. Here, the moment after his birth, the recluse took seven steps upon the ground."

The king bestowed a hundred thousand gold pieces on the people of the

[2] At the first Council, held shortly after the Buddha's parinibbāna in Rājagaha under the presidency of Mahā Kassapa, the collection of the Dhamma and the Vinaya (Book of Discipline for the monks) was established. At the second Council, held one century later at Vesali, the teaching of heretical views was refuted. At the third council the "Points of Controversy" (Kathāvatthu), as we have it in its present form, was established as a treatise against schismatic groups and incorporated into the Abhidhamma.

[3] Another source states that it was his younger brother.

[4] See: Vincent Arthur Smith, "Asoka". Low Price Publication, New Delhi, 1994.

[5] Moggaliputta-Tissa's name is given in the northern texts as Upagupta.

place, and built a stupa. He then passed on to Kapilavastu.

The royal pilgrim next visited the Bodhi-tree at Bodh Gaya, and there also gave a largess of a hundred thousand gold pieces, and built a chaitya (cedi). Rishipatana (Sarnath) near Benares, where Gautama had “turned the wheel of the law”, and Kusinagare, where the teacher had passed away, were also visited with similar observances. At Srāvastī the pilgrims did reverence to the Jetavana monastery, where Gautama had so long dwelt and taught, and to the stupas of his disciples, Sāriputra, Maudgalāyana (Moggallāna), and Mahā-Kāsyapa (Kassapa). But when the king visited the stupa of Vakkula, he gave only one copper coin, inasmuch as Vakkula had met with few obstacles in the path of holiness, and had done little good to his fellow creatures. At the stupa of Ānanda, the faithful attendant of Gautama, the royal gift amounted to six million gold pieces.

In October 1999, we joined a large group of Thai pilgrims and followed the footsteps of King Asoka in visiting the holy places. The group started in Patna, which, under the name of Pāṭaliputta, was the capital of King Asoka’s empire.

Khun [6] Sujin Boriharnwanaket, our friend in the Dhamma and our teacher, was our spiritual leader and Khun Suwat Chansuvityanant together with his son Khun Pakabutr were in charge of the organisation of the tour. Also Acharn Somporn Srivaratit, Khun Santi Phantakeong Amorn and many other friends took part in this tour. Jack Tippayachan, his wife Oj and other friends had come from from California, Khun Buth Sawong and Khun Soun Orsoth had come from Cambodia. My husband Lodewijk and I came from the Netherlands and started our pilgrimage in New Delhi. There, we went to Kailash (East of Kailash, near the C. Market) in the region which was formerly called Kuru, where the Buddha preached the Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Discourse on Mindfulness. We had to go over some dirt to reach the steps leading to the rock where King Asoka had an inscription made to mark the place. A concrete roof has been erected over this place. Just before we arrived a group of Singhalese pilgrims had sprinkled water over the inscription and therefore it was clearly visible. Our guide held up the grill which protects the stone, so that we could look at it while we paid respect. Our guide was interested at the Buddha’s teachings and wanted to know more about the contents. We spoke about the fact that there is no person or self, only elements devoid of self. Afterwards we went to the National Museum in order to pay respect to a relic of the Buddha which has now been enshrined by Thai Buddhists under the patronage of the Royal Thai Government. In the museum we spoke with our guide about the Buddha who, as a Bodhisatta, had to

[6] Mr or Ms is in Thai Khun. Ms. Sujin is in Thailand also called Acharn, which means teacher.

accumulate wisdom during endless lives. Also for us the development of understanding will take aeons. We flew to Patna where we joined our Thai friends and began our pilgrimage together with them, in four buses. Our journey brought us to Nālandā, Rājagaha, Varāṇasī (Benares), Kusināra, Sāvatthī, and then via Bairawa, in Nepal, to Lumbini, Pokkhara and Kathmandu where our Thai friends would fly back to Bangkok. Lumbini, the birth place of the Bodhisatta, was the last place we visited because of the route the buses had to take. In the holy places we recited together those parts of the scriptures and commentaries which were referring to the place we visited. It was festival time for the Hindus, Durka Pujjā. On this occasion processions were held in the villages with the statues of the deities which were venerated and at the end of the festival the statues were thrown into the river so that they would float to the sea. We had several rainy days: in Nālanda where we visited the Thai monastery; when we climbed the Vulture's Peak (Gijjhakūṭa) near Rājagaha; when we walked in the Bamboo Grove (Veḷuvana); when we were in Bodh Gaya. Vulture's Peak is on one of the five hills encircling the old city of Rājagaha. The Buddha used to stay here and once, when he was walking on the slopes, Devadatta hurled a stone at him in order to kill him. However, only a splinter hurt his foot. We walked around in the Bamboo Grove near Rājagaha where the Buddha preached the Discourse on the three characteristics of realities: impermanence, dukkha (suffering) and anattā. When we were in Bodh Gaya, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment, we walked in the rain on wet pavement while going around the place near the Bodhi-tree three times. Usually many pilgrims of different nationalities walk around but this time the place was quite deserted because of the rain. This reminded Khun Sujin of the time which will come in the future when the teachings will decline and then disappear.

Khun Sujin gave Dhamma talks on the way as much as she could. Sometimes the discussions were in the hotels and sometimes outside when we could sit on the grounds. At the Cremation Stupa near Kusināra and in the Jeta Grove, near Sāvatthī, we went on with the discussions until after dark. In the bus we listened to tapes referring to the holy places and tapes about phenomena as they appear through the senses and the mind-door, about all the realities the Buddha taught. Ell Walsh was holding the tape recorder all day in the bus so that we were able to listen. She helped all of us in many ways.

For the writing of this book I used the discussions we held, material from tapes and from the scriptures and commentaries we discussed. I greatly appreciate Khun Sujin's untiring efforts to explain the Dhamma, exhorting us to verify the Dhamma ourselves. She was stressing all the time that the Dhamma is not theory, that it has to be realized by being mindful of realities

at this very moment. She showed us time and again that only through the development of satipaṭṭhāna we can have direct understanding of realities. I also appreciate the many explanations of Pāli terms Acharn Somporn gave, reminding us that these refer to the reality appearing now. I also consulted Khun Santi Phantakeong Amorn many times on difficult points of the Dhamma and I greatly appreciated his advice. He has written a most useful lexicon to Khun Sujin's book "A Survey of Paramattha Dhammas". I am quoting from his lexicon in this book. He does not only explain the Pāli terms, but at the same time he also reminds us in this lexicon to continue developing right understanding so that eventually enlightenment can be attained.

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Chapter 1

The Holy Places

The Buddha was born 623 B.C. in Lumbini as Prince Siddhattha, son of Suddhodana, King of the Sākyas and Queen Māya. He attained enlightenment at the age of thirtyfive in Bodh Gaya; he delivered his first sermon in Sarnath, at the Deerpark of Isipatana, and, after having taught for fortyfive years, he passed finally away in Kusināra.

Countless people have visited the holy places, century after century, and also today people visit the place where the Buddha was born, where he attained enlightenment, where he delivered his first sermon and where he passed finally away. The Buddha had, as a Bodhisatta, accumulated all the "perfections" (pāramīs) during aeons. These perfections are: liberality (dāna), morality (sīla), renunciation (nekkhamma), wisdom (paññā), energy (viriya), patience (khanti), truthfulness (sacca), resolution (adiṭṭhāna), loving kindness (mettā) and equanimity (upekkhā). Before he was to be born as a human being in his last life, he stayed in the "Tusita Heaven". He had fulfilled all the perfections and now the time had come for his last birth as Prince Siddhattha Gotama. In the "Discourse on Wonderful and Marvellous Qualities" (Middle Length Sayings III, 123) we read that the Buddha asked Ānanda to deliver to the monks a Discourse on the wonderful and marvellous qualities of the Tathāgata. We read that he arose in Tusita Heaven mindful and clearly conscious, remained there mindful and clearly conscious, and stayed there as long as his lifespan lasted. These were wonderful and marvellous qualities of the Lord. We read in the same sutta that he ascended in the womb of Queen Māya who gave birth in Lumbini Gardens after ten months, while standing, and that four devas received the new-born and placed him in front of his mother. There appeared then from the sky two streams of water, one cool and one warm, which were used for a water-libation for the Bodhisatta and his mother.

In Lumbini we saw the pillar King Asoka had erected 249 B.C. when he payed hommage at the place where the Buddha was born. An inscription on the pillar says that King Asoka, after having been anointed for twenty years, came himself and worshipped this spot, because the Buddha Sakyamuni was born here. The inscription also says that King Asoka made the village of Lumbini free of taxes and that it had to pay only an eighth share of the produce. There is also a temple in honour of Queen Māya erected on an older structure, but today this temple is not accessible. Queen Māya died on the seventh day after the birth of the Bodhisatta, as is always the case for the Bodhisatta's mother. We paid respect going around the pillar with chanting

and we sat near a pool which reminds us of the water-libation for the Bodhisatta and his mother. We recited texts from the scriptures and the commentary on the Chronicle of Buddhas (Buddhavaṁsa, the "Clarifier of Sweet Meaning") concerning the birth of the Bodhisatta. Afterwards we had a Dhamma discussion.

We read in the same sutta about the wonderful and marvellous qualities of the Buddha concerning the moments just after his birth:

Face to face with the Lord, revered sir, have I heard, face to face have I learnt: "The moment, Ānanda, the Bodhisatta has come to birth, standing on even feet and facing north, he takes seven strides, and while a white sunshade is being held over him, he scans all the quarters and utters as with the voice of a bull: 'I am chief in the world, I am best in the world, I am eldest in the world. This is the last birth, there is not now again-becoming'..."

The Bodhisatta was leading a life full of sense-pleasures, but after he saw an old man, a sick man and a corpse he realized the futility of such a life. When he saw a recluse, wearing a yellow robe, he decided to go forth and become a monk in order to seek the truth. He took instructions first from Āḷāra Kālāma who could attain arūpa-jhāna (immaterial absorption) as far as the "plane of nothingness", but he found that this did not lead to enlightenment. He then took instructions from Uddaka who could attain the highest stage of arūpa-jhāna, the "plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception", but he found that this did not lead to enlightenment either. The Bodhisatta decided to search for the truth alone, and he practised rigid austerities. He ate so little that he became like a skeleton. He found that this was not the way to enlightenment either. On the full-moon day of Visākha (May) he accepted boiled rice and sour milk from Sujātā, near Uruvela. He threw the bowl upstream into the river Nerañjarā and he knew that on that day he would attain enlightenment. We walked along the river Nerañjarā and saw statues which represent the scene of Sujātā giving the rice and sour milk to the Bodhisatta. In the evening of that same day the Bodhisatta walked to the Bodhi-tree and sat down under it.

We read in the "Middle Length Sayings" (I, 4, "Discourse on Fear and Dread") that the Buddha related to the brahman Jāṇussoṇi how he spent the three watches of the night during which he attained enlightenment. In the first watch he recollected his former lives, in the second watch he directed the mind to the passing away and rebirth of beings. In the third watch he realized the four noble Truths. We read:

Then with the mind composed... fixed, immovable, I directed my mind to

the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers. I understood as it really is: This is dukkha (suffering), this is the arising of dukkha, this is the stopping of dukkha, this is the course leading to the stopping of dukkha. I understood as it really is: These are the cankers, this is the arising of the cankers, this is the stopping of the cankers, this is the course leading to the stopping of the cankers. Knowing this thus, seeing thus, my mind was freed from the canker of sense-pleasures, and my mind was freed from the canker of becoming, and my mind was freed from the canker of ignorance. In freedom the knowledge came to me: I am freed; and I comprehended: Destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the Brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or such. This, brahman, was the third knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night; ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose, darkness was dispelled, light arose even as I abided diligent, ardent, self-resolute.

The Buddha had become a Sammāsambuddha who could through his teaching of Dhamma help others to be freed from birth, old age, sickness and death.

It is said that the location of the temple, adjoining the Bodhi-tree, built on top of a much older structure, is the actual place of the Buddha’s enlightenment. We paid respect in this temple and we paid respect near the Bodhi-tree where candles were placed. We went around the area of the Bodhi-tree three times. Near the Bodhi-tree small monuments have been erected commemorating how the Buddha spent the first weeks after his enlightenment. The fourth week after his enlightenment he contemplated the Abhidhamma, which is commemorated by the “Jewel House”, but we could not reach this monument because it was partly inundated by the rain. We can pay respect to the Buddha with incense and candles, but above all we should pay respect by considering his teaching about realities, by having discussions and by developing right understanding. Because of the rain we could not have a Dhamma discussion near the Bodhi-tree as we used to have at other occasions, but we held it in the evening in the hotel.

The Buddha wanted to teach Dhamma to his former teacher Aḷāra Kālāma, but he had passed away. The Buddha then wanted to teach Dhamma to Uddaka but he also had passed away. The Buddha decided to teach the five monks who had been his attendants before and who were now staying near Vārāṇasī (Benares) at Isipatana in the Deer-park. When they saw the Buddha from afar they did not want to attend to him because they believed that he had reverted to a life of abundance after he had accepted solid food from Sujātā. But when the Buddha came near they changed their minds. The Buddha then preached his first sermon and set rolling the “Wheel of

Dhamma”.

In Sarnath one can see the great Stupa, the place of the first sermon, and excavations of old structures which were once the monks’ dwellings. The Chinese pilgrims Fa Hian (beginning fifth century) and Hiuen Tsang (640) who gave accounts of their pilgrimages to the holy places, also described Sarnath and the monuments they saw there. One can still see a remnant of a stone pillar erected by King Asoka.

Our group presented a meal to hundred twenty monks of different nationalities in the Mahā-Bodhi Society. In the afternoon we visited a temple built by the Mahā-Bodhi Society where relics of the Buddha are kept which are shown once a year. But for this occasion the relics were taken out by the Singhalese monks who are guarding them and they were placed on Khun Sujin’s head. After that we all were allowed to come near and pay respect while one of the monks was pointing with a lotus to the relics. We then approached the relics for a second time and these were placed on the head of each one of us while one of the monks recited a stanza. It must have taken us countless lives to listen to the Dhamma and develop understanding, countless lives of accumulating conditions which enabled us to experience such a moment. The relics are all that is left of the Buddha’s bodily frame and when the teachings have deteriorated and disappeared also the relics will disappear. It may take again many lives before understanding is fully developed so that enlightenment can be attained. Thus, paying respect to the relics can remind us to have firm resolution to continue developing understanding, even though it can be only a little in each life.

At the end of the afternoon we went to the Great Stupa and recited from the Vinaya the text dealing with the first sermon (Book of the Discipline IV, Mahā-vagga, I, the Great Section). The Buddha explained that the two extremes of addiction to sense-pleasures and of self-torment should be avoided and that the “Middle Way”, the eightfold Path, should be followed. He explained to five disciples the four noble Truths, the Truth of dukkha (suffering) of the origin of dukkha, of the ceasing of dukkha and of the way leading to the ceasing of dukkha. We read:

And this, monks, is the ariyan truth of dukkha: birth is dukkha, and old age is dukkha and disease is dukkha and dying is dukkha, association with what is not dear is dukkha, separation from what is dear is dukkha, not getting what one wants is dukkha— in short the five khandhas of grasping are dukkha...

We then read about the origin of dukkha which is craving, about the ceasing of dukkha which is nibbāna and the way leading to the ceasing of

dukkha which is the eightfold Path.

When it was already dark we went three times around the Stupa. Afterwards we had a Dhamma discussion in the hotel in Benares. We spoke about the cycle of birth and death, about saṃsāra, which term means “going around”. In many lives we did not know the dhamma, the reality, which appears. Seeing arises and then falls away, and there is nothing left. Hearing arises and then falls away, there is nothing left. In each life citta, consciousness, arises and falls away. The dukkha in the cycle of birth and death is the arising and falling away of realities. The Buddha said in his first sermon that the five khandhas are dukkha. Rūpakkhandha, physical phenomena, vedanākkhandha, the khandha of feelings, saññākkhandha, the khandha of perception or memory, saṅkhārakkhandha, the khandha of “formations” or “activities” (all mental factors, cetasikas, except feeling and perception), and viññāṇakkhandha, the khandha of consciousness (all cittas) arise and then fall away immediately, and therefore they are dukkha.

The Buddha preached many suttas in the Jeta Grove, near Sāvatthī, where he stayed nineteen rainy seasons [7]. Anāthapiṇḍika who wanted to offer this Grove to the Buddha, had to buy it from Prince Jeta. He had to cover the area with pieces of gold, but he did not have enough gold to cover one small spot near the gateway and then Prince Jeta said that he wanted to offer this spot. There are many excavations at the sites where the dwelling-places of the Buddha and his disciples were. There is also a Bodhi-tree planted by Ānanda. We read in the Commentary to the “Kāliṅga-Bodhi-Jātaka” (IV, no. 479) that Ānanda said to the Buddha that while he was traveling the people who used to visit him and pay respect to him had no place where they could show their reverence. Therefore Ānanda asked permission to plant a seed of the Great Bodhi-tree near the gateway. The Buddha gave his permission and Anāthapiṇḍika planted it. It grew up as soon as it was planted and became a huge tree. The tree is known by the name of Ānanda’s Bo-Tree.

While the Buddha stayed at the Jeta Grove many people visited him in order to pay respect and listen to the Dhamma. We read in the Commentary to the “Brahmajāla Sutta” (Dialogues of the Buddha, Dīgha Nikāya I, no.1), in the “Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī” about the daily routine of the Buddha. In the morning he would go out on his alms round, and accept people’s offerings. When he had finished his meal he surveyed the dispositions of the people present and then taught Dhamma to them. Upon his return to the monastery he sat in the pavilion, waiting until the monks had finished their meal. Then he entered his dwelling place, the “Fragrant Cottage”. In the afternoon he washed his feet and after that he exhorted the monks and gave those who requested it a meditation subject [8]. After that the monks retired to different

[7] During the rainy season the monks did not travel, but stayed in one dwelling place.

[8] Meditation subject, kammaṭṭhāna, does not only refer to a meditation subject of samatha. We read in the

places such as the forest, the foot of a tree or the mountains. The Buddha entered his Fragrant Cottage and if he wished he lay down for a few moments in the "lion's posture", mindful and clearly conscious. He then rose and in the second part of the afternoon he surveyed the world. In the third part of the afternoon he taught Dhamma to the people who visited him and paid respect to him. When he had finished his afternoon activities, if he wanted to bathe, he entered the bathroom and refreshed his body with water brought by his attendant. After the Buddha had put on his robes and sat alone for a few moments in solitary meditation, the monks came to him, asking questions, requesting meditation subjects and asking for his explanation about points of Dhamma. These were his activities in the first watch of the night. In the middle watch of the night deities visited him asking questions, and the Buddha replied to their questions. The last watch of the night was divided into three parts: in the first part he walked up and down since he had been sitting for a long time; in the second part he entered the Fragrant Cottage and lay down on his right side, in the lion's posture, mindful and clearly conscious; in the third part he rose and surveyed the world with his Buddha-eye in order to see who had in the past performed dāna and observed sīla in the presence of past Buddhas. Thus we see that the Buddha was intent on the welfare of others all the time.

While we were in the Jeta Grove we sat down near the spot where once was the Buddha's dwelling place and we recited from the Vinaya (Book of Discipline, V, Cullavagga VI, 154) the story about Anāthapiṇḍika who bought the Jeta Grove and presented it to the Buddha. Then we had a Dhamma discussion and after dark we paid respect by going around the Buddha's dwelling place three times.

The Buddha taught for forty-five years and when he was eighty he passed finally away. In Kusināra we visited the place of his Parinibbāna. A temple with a recumbent Buddha-image marks this place. When the Buddha was passing away he was lying in the "lion's posture". We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (IV, Saḷāyatana-vagga, Fourth Fifty, Ch IV, § 202) that when the Buddha was resting he did so in the lion's posture, lying on his right side, "putting one foot on the other, collected and composed, with his mind set on rising up again". We paid respect near the Buddha image in the temple and we also went around the Stupa which has been erected near the temple and paid respect by chanting and by talking about nāma, mental phenomena, and rūpa, physical phenomena, which are non-self.

We read in the "Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta" (Dialogues of the Buddha, Dīgha Nikāya, II, 16) about the last days of the Buddha. His last meal was

"Manorathapūraṇi", the commentary to the "Gradual Sayings"(Book of the Threes, Ch 7, § 61, Tenets), that with the meditation subjects which are the five khandhas, all rūpa and nāma, one can become an arahat. These subjects are all realities appearing now.

offered to him by Cunda, the metalworker. The "Sūkara-maddava" (truffles or pork meat) caused the Buddha deadly pains. Inspite of this the Buddha wanted to go to Kusināra. The Buddha said to Ānanda that he would come to his Parinibbāna (final passing away) during the last watch of the night, in the Mallas' Sāla-grove, near Kusināra, in between two Sāla trees. Until his last moments the Buddha thought of the wellbeing of others. He said that Cunda's remorse about the last meal which caused deadly pains should be dispelled, explaining to him that there are two offerings which are of equal fruition, exceeding in excellence the fruition of any other offerings of food: the offering of food taken by the Buddha before his enlightenment and the offering of food taken by the Buddha before his Parinibbāna. He said: "By his deed has the venerable Cunda accumulated that which makes for long life, beauty, wellbeing, glory, heavenly rebirth, and sovereignty!"[9]

When Ānanda was weeping because the Buddha was going to pass away while he, Ānanda, was still a "learner" (sekha, an ariyan who has not attained to the stage of arahatship) the Buddha called him and explained to him that it is in the nature of things near and dear to us that we must suffer separation from them. He said that Ānanda should put forth energy and that he would be freed from defilements. He then praised Ānanda.

Subhadda, a wandering ascetic, visited the Buddha who explained that in other teachings there is no noble Eightfold Path and no true ascetics of the first, second, third or fourth degree, save in the Buddha's teaching. Subhadda took his refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and received ordination. The Buddha's last words were: "Behold now, bhikkhus, I exhort you: transient are all the elements of being! Strive with earnestness!" After the Buddha attained the different stages of rūpa-jhāna and arūpa-jhāna he entered the state of the Cessation of Perception and Feeling. After he had emerged from that stage he entered the highest stage of arūpa-jhāna and then attained in reverse order the other stages of arūpa-jhāna and of rūpa-jhāna. Then he entered again the four stages of rūpa-jhāna from the first up to the highest and after that he passed finally away.

Near Kusināra a stupa commemorates the place of the Buddha's cremation. We had visited this stupa in the evening and had held a Dhamma discussion there until after dark. The next day we visited this place again and recited from the Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta the passages concerning the cremation of the Buddha and the partition of his relics. The relics were divided into eight portions and given to the King of Magadha, the Licchavis of Vesālī and others. Stupas were erected over the relics and moreover, a ninth stupa was erected for the urn and a tenth for the ashes.

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[9] I am using the translation of the Buddhist Publication Society, Wheel 67-69, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

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Chapter 2

Ultimate Realities.

We paid respect to the Buddha in the holy places by incense and candles, by walking around the stupas and the Bodhi-tree, by chanting and reciting texts from the scriptures and the commentaries. We can pay respect above all by studying and considering the Dhamma and by developing satipaṭṭhāna which is the way to directly understand the true nature of the realities the Buddha taught for fortyfive years. Therefore we had Dhamma discussions as often as we could in the holy places and in the hotels where we stayed. Without the understanding of the Dhamma it is difficult to take one's refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. One may pay respect because one has been taught to do so, but one's confidence may not be very strong. When we develop right understanding of the realities the Buddha taught our confidence and also our respect for the Buddha will grow.

The Buddha taught that there is no person, no self. What we take for a person are mental phenomena, nāma, and physical phenomena, rūpa, which arise and then fall away. Nāma experiences something whereas rūpa does not experience anything. Citta, consciousness, is nāma, it experiences an object. Seeing is a citta experiencing colour or visible object, hearing is a citta experiencing sound. Only one citta arises at a time and then falls away immediately, to be succeeded by the next citta. There cannot be seeing and hearing at the same time. Each citta is accompanied by several mental factors, cetasikas, such as feeling, remembrance and contact. Mental factors, cetasikas, are nāma, they experience the same object as the citta they accompany but they have each their own function while they assist the citta in experiencing that object. Cetasikas arise and fall away together with the citta they accompany.

Rūpa does not experience anything. There are different kinds of rūpas which can be rūpas of the body or physical phenomena outside. Visible object, sound, odour, flavour and tangible object are rūpas which are experienced by different cittas. Eyesense is a kind of rūpa in the eye which is able to receive the impact of colour, and earsense is a kind of rūpa in the ear which is able to receive the impact of sound, and also the other senses can receive the appropriate sense objects. The senses are rūpas which do not know anything, but they are the means through which citta can experience an object. They are called "doorway", in Pāli: dvāra. When we think of the conventional term "door" we think of something which lasts, but the doors of the senses do not last, they arise, perform their function and then fall away. Seeing experiences colour through the eye-door, hearing experiences sound through the ear-door,

and it is the same with the other sense-cognitions. Rūpas arise and fall away in groups consisting of different kinds of rūpa. Each group consists at least of eight rūpas: the four Great Elements which are solidity, cohesion, heat and motion, and in addition colour, odour, flavour and nutritive essence. Thus, when colour or visible object arises, it does not arise alone, it is accompanied by the other seven rūpas of that group. Seeing experiences visible object, it does not experience the accompanying rūpas of that group.

What we take for a whole of mind and body, a person, are only citta, cetasika and rūpa which do not last. Citta, cetasika and rūpa arise because of their appropriate conditions. Whatever arises because of conditions has to fall away again, because the conditioning factors are also phenomena which do not last. If there were no colour and no eyesense there could not be seeing. Colour and eyesense which arise are conditions for seeing, they perform their functions and then they fall away. Seeing also falls away immediately.

There is one reality which is unconditioned and that is nibbāna. Nibbāna is not rūpa, it is nāma, but it does not experience an object and it does not arise and fall away. It can be experienced by the cittas of the person who attains enlightenment.

Citta, cetasika, rūpa and nibbāna are paramattha dhammas, ultimate realities [10]. Paramattha dhammas are different from conventional truth. Person, animal or table are conventional realities we all know. We give them names to designate them in our daily life. They are objects of thinking, but they have no characteristics which can be directly experienced. Through the Buddha's teaching we come to know paramattha dhammas, ultimate truth we had not heard of before. They have their own characteristics which cannot be changed. We can change their names, but their characteristics cannot be changed. Seeing is always seeing, no matter how we name it. It experiences visible object through the eyes. Khun Santi writes in his lexicon about the ultimate truth. We read concerning citta, cetasika and rūpa:

"... Even when we do not name them, they appear. For example, the characteristic which sees, hears, smells, tastes, experiences tangible object or thinks is citta paramattha dhamma.

The characteristic which is angry, attached, forgetful, remembers, is confident, recollects, knows the truth, suffers pain, is happy, sad, indifferent, these are the cetasika paramattha dhamma.

The characteristic which is visible, loud, malodorous, fragrant, sour, sweet, punguent, cold, hot, soft, hard, mobile, resilient, all these are characteristics of rūpa paramattha."

[10] The Pāli term paramattha is derived from parama, which can mean superior, highest, and attha, which is meaning. Paramattha dhammas are realities in the highest or ultimate sense.

As to the unconditioned paramattha dhamma, nibbāna, this does not arise and fall away. Nibbāna means freedom from the dukkha inherent in the five khandhas which arise and fall away.

Citta, cetasika and rūpa are appearing at this moment, they are real for everybody. They have no owner, they arise because of their own conditions and then they fall away. It seems that we can see people, but then we are thinking of conventional realities or concepts. It is difficult to truly understand the characteristic of seeing, an element which only experiences what is visible. On account of seeing we think of people and this is conditioned by remembrance of past moments of seeing, defining and recognizing. Each citta experiences an object. Sometimes the object of citta is a paramattha dhamma and sometimes it is a concept or conventional reality. When citta thinks of a person it does not experience a paramattha dhamma. We should not force ourselves not to think of concepts, because thinking arises because of conditions, thinking itself is a paramattha dhamma and it can be understood as such. Gradually we can learn the difference between ultimate truth and conventional truth.

We read in Khun Santi's lexicon about the understanding of paramattha dhammas:

"... One should study in order to understand that what is true in the ultimate sense is different from what is true merely in conventional sense. When one understands these two kinds of truths one will know that the realization of the four noble Truths is actually the penetration of the truth of paramattha dhammas. This can be achieved by being mindful and by understanding the true nature of citta, cetasika and rūpa which appear in our daily life, until eventually the truth which is nibbāna can be realized."

It is not sufficient to merely know the names of citta, cetasika and rūpa, to have only theoretical understanding of them. We should verify the truth of the paramattha dhammas which appear in our daily life. We need to be reminded of the truth by listening, reading and studying, it never is enough. When we hear that nāma experiences an object and that rūpa does not know anything it may seem simple, but this truth should be considered again and again. As we just read, anger, like or dislike are cetasikas, visible object or flavour are rūpas. These are realities of our daily life appearing time and again. We should consider the truth that a rūpa such as flavour is completely different from nāma such as like or dislike. It is essential to gradually learn the difference between nāma and rūpa, because so long as we confuse their characteristics there is no way to become detached from the concept of self. Khun Sujin often repeated that seeing is nāma, the element which experiences

visible object, and that visible object is rūpa. Some people may feel bored to hear this again and again, but when we carefully consider the reality appearing at the present moment it never is boring; it is always new, because by considering what we hear understanding can grow little by little. We are so used to thinking of a self who sees, we have to be reminded again and again that it is nāma which sees. We are absorbed in our thoughts arising on account of what is seen that we forget that seeing can only see what is visible. We cannot hear often enough that it is only visible object which is seen, a kind of rūpa.

If the Buddha had not taught about paramattha dhammas and if the scriptures had not been established by means of the Great Councils we would have no possibility to learn about the truth. The scriptures and also the ancient commentaries and subcommentaries which explain the scriptures are of utmost importance[11]. Lodewijk, my husband, stressed during this journey that reading the scriptures themselves is essential, as well as studying the Abhidhamma. He found that without a foundation knowledge of realities the scriptures cannot be understood. He used to find the study of details tedious, but now he is convinced that details relate to realities.

It is important to learn more about paramattha dhammas in detail. Cittas and their accompanying cetasikas can be of four "jātis" (class or nature): they can be unwholesome or akusala, wholesome or kusala, result or vipāka and neither cause nor result or "inoperative", kiriya. Akusala cittas are always accompanied by the akusala cetasika which is ignorance, moha, and they may be accompanied as well by the akusala cetasika of attachment, lobha, or by the akusala cetasika of aversion, dosa. These three cetasikas are called roots (hetu), because they are the foundations of akusala cittas. Besides these three akusala hetus there are other akusala cetasikas which can accompny only akusala cittas. There are three beautiful roots or sobhana hetus: non-attachment, alobha, non-aversion, adosa, and wisdom or paññā. Alobha and adosa accompany each kusala citta and paññā may or may not accompany kusala citta. Besides these three sobhana hetus there are other sobhana cetasikas which can accompany kusala citta.

Akusala citta and kusala citta can motivate deeds through body, speech or mind. These deeds are called kamma, but when we are more precise, kamma is actually the intention or volition (cetanā cetasika) which motivates an unwholesome or a wholesome deed. Akusala kamma and kusala kamma can produce results later on in the form of unpleasant rebirth or pleasant rebirth or in the course of life, in the form of unpleasant or pleasant experiences

[11] The three parts of the scriptures are the Vinaya or Book of Discipline for the moniks, the Suttanta or Discourses and the Abhidhamma, the teaching of ultimate realities. Most of the ancient commentaries have been written by Buddhaghosa, and they date from the fifth century A.D. He used more ancient commentarial works which he edited. He also wrote the encyclopedia the "Visuddhimagga", the "Path of Purification".

through the senses. Vipākacittas are cittas which are results of kamma. Seeing is vipākacitta, it experiences an unpleasant or a pleasant object through the eyesense, and it is the same with the other sense-cognitions. It is hard to tell whether seeing or hearing which arises now is kusala vipāka or akusala vipāka, since cittas arise and fall away extremely rapidly.

Seeing experiences visible object, but seeing is not the only citta experiencing visible object; it arises within a process or series of cittas, all of which experience visible object. The object is experienced by vipākacittas, kiriyacittas and kusala cittas or akusala cittas. Cittas arise and fall away succeeding one another. There never is a moment without citta. After the vipākacitta which is seeing has fallen away akusala cittas or kusala cittas experience visible object in an unwholesome way or wholesome way. When an object is pleasant there is likely to be attachment and when an object is unpleasant there is likely to be aversion. After an object has been experienced through a sense-door it is experienced through the mind-door.

All this concerns our daily life, even at this very moment. As soon as we have seen or heard there is likely to be attachment, even though we do not notice it. We have accumulated attachment during countless lives and thus there are conditions for its arising on account of the experience of the sense objects. We notice attachment when it is strong, when we like to possess something, but there are many shades and degrees of attachment and it may be so subtle that we do not notice it. When we are not engaged with kusala, wholesomeness, the sense-cognitions (seeing, hearing, etc.) are followed by akusala cittas, cittas with attachment, aversion and ignorance. It is important to have more understanding of akusala and of kusala which arises in our life. Generosity (dāna), morality (sīla), and mental development (bhāvana) are ways of kusala. Studying the Dhamma, tranquil meditation and vipassanā, the development of insight, are included in bhāvana. Thus, when we are thinking and the objective is not one of these ways of kusala, we think with akusala cittas. When we study the Dhamma we come to realize that we have many more akusala cittas than kusala cittas. Truthfulness is one of the perfections the Bodhisatta accumulated and it is a perfection we too should accumulate. We should be truthful, sincere with regard to the akusala we have accumulated. Without the Buddha's teachings we would be ignorant about the akusala cittas which arise. They can be objects of right understanding, they are nāmas arising because of conditions, they are non-self.

Citta, cetasika and rūpa have been classified as five aggregates or khandhas: the khandhas of rūpa, feeling, perception (saññā), the habitual tendencies (saṅkhārakkhandha, all cetasikas except feeling and saññā) and viññāṇa (citta). We read many times in the scriptures about the five khandhas which are impermanent. Such texts are not monotonous, but most

beneficial. We keep on forgetting that all the people and all our possessions we are attached to are only fleeting phenomena, insignificant dhammas and thus, we need time and again to be reminded of the truth. We read in the "Middle Length Sayings" (I, 35, Lesser Discourse to Saccaka) that Saccaka, son of the Jains, approached the venerable Assaji. He asked Assaji how the Buddha trained his disciples, and what his instructions were. Assaji answered that the Buddha instructed his disciples as follows:

"Rūpa, monks, is impermanent, feelings are impermanent, perception (saññā) is impermanent, the habitual tendencies (saṅkhārakkhandha) are impermanent, consciousness is impermanent. Rūpa, monks, is not self, feeling is not self, perception is not self, the habitual tendencies are not self, consciousness is not self; all conditioned realities are impermanent, all dhammas are not self."

We then read that Saccaka approached the Buddha with the wish to refute him and make him confused. He asked the Buddha how he trained his disciples and received the same answer as Assaji had given him. Saccaka stated that he took all the khandhas for self. Further on we read that the Buddha asked him:

"What do you think about this, Aggivessana? When you speak thus: 'Rūpa is myself,' have you power over this rūpa of yours (and can you say), 'Let my rūpa be thus, Let my rūpa be not thus?' "

Saccaka became silent, but when the Buddha said that if he would not answer his skull would split into seven pieces, he became afraid and agitated. He answered that he did not have power over rūpa. The Buddha then asked him whether he had power over the other khandhas and Saccaka answered that he had not. The Buddha asked Saccaka further about the nature of the five khandhas:

"Is rūpa permanent or impermanent?'"
"Impermanent, good Gotama."
"But is what is impermanent dukkha (anguish) or happiness?"
"Dukkha, good Gotama."
"But is it fitting to regard that which is impermanent, dukkha, liable to change as 'This is mine, this am I, this is my self'?"
"This is not so, good Gotama."

We then read that the Buddha asked the same about the other khandhas

and that Saccaka gave the same answer. We read further on that Saccaka asked the Buddha to what extent a disciple becomes a doer of the instruction, one who accepts the exhortation, one who has overcome doubt and perplexity, and who lives according to the teacher's instruction, won to conviction, not relying on others. The Buddha answered:

"Now, Aggivessana, a disciple of mine in regard to whatever is rūpa, past, future, present, internal (personal) or outward, gross or subtle, low or excellent, distant or near, sees all rūpa as it really is by means of perfect intuitive wisdom as : This is not mine, this am I not, this is not my self..."

The Buddha said the same about the other khandhas. Saccaka asked how a monk becomes a perfected one, who has eradicated defilements, who will not be reborn again and is freed with profound knowledge. The Buddha stated that this is achieved when the monk, having seen the khandhas as "This is not mine, this am I not, this is not my self", becomes freed with no further attachment. We see that time and again the Buddha spoke about the five khandhas which should be seen as they are. The object of understanding is the same, nāma and rūpa, but the understanding of them develops until arahatship has been attained and all defilements are eradicated.

The five khandhas are not an abstraction, they arise and fall away even now. Feeling accompanies each citta, it may be pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent. Perception or remembrance, saññā, accompanies each citta, performing the function of remembering or recognizing. In Saṅkhārakkhandha are included all sobhana (beautiful) cetasikas and akusala cetasikas, and these accompany kusala citta or akusala citta which arise in each process of cittas, no matter whether an object is experienced through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense or mind-door. We cannot be reminded enough of what is kusala and what akusala, because we are ignorant of the cittas which arise. We often do not notice that there is akusala citta. Viññāṇakkhandha is citta, arising and falling away each moment. That is what the Buddha taught: the development of understanding of all these realities appearing now.

The Buddha said to Saccaka that the arahat who is freed reveres, esteems, reverences and honours the Tathāgata with the following words:

"The Lord is awakened, he teaches Dhamma for awakening; the Lord is tamed, he teaches Dhamma for taming; the Lord is calmed, he teaches Dhamma for calming; the Lord is crossed over, he teaches dhamma for crossing over; the Lord has attained nibbāna, he teaches Dhamma for attaining nibbāna."

The arahat has full understanding of the meaning of these words and thus he can give the highest honour and respect to the Buddha.

Saccaka expressed his regret about the fact that he was so arrogant and presumptuous and that he tried to assail the Buddha by his speech. He invited the Buddha and the Order of monks to a meal and the Buddha accepted.

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Chapter 3

Satipaṭṭhāna

The Buddha taught satipaṭṭhāna, the development of right understanding of paramattha dhammas. When there is mindfulness, sati, of a reality right understanding of that reality can be developed. Sati is a sobhana cetasika which accompanies each sobhana citta, it is non-forgetful of what is wholesome. There are different levels of sati: there is sati when we perform deeds of generosity, dāna; there is sati of the level of sīla, which is non-forgetful to abstain from akusala; there is sati with mental development, which includes the development of samatha, calm, the study of the Dhamma and the development of insight. When samatha is developed, sati is mindful of the meditation subject, and when insight, vipassanā, is developed, sati is mindful of the nāma or rūpa appearing through one of the six doors.

The term satipaṭṭhāna [12] has three meanings. It can mean the object of which sati is mindful, classified as the four Applications of mindfulness, including all conditioned nāmas and rūpas [13]. It can mean sati cetasika which is mindful of realities. It can also mean the Path the Buddha and his disciples followed towards the realization of the four noble Truths.

When we hear the word "mindfulness" we should remember that its meaning in the Buddhist sense is different from what we used to understand by mindfulness or awareness. When we say in conventional language that we are mindful, we mean that we know what we are doing, and such a way of thinking may be accompanied by lobha, attachment. Sati cannot accompany akusala citta. Sati of satipaṭṭhāna is wholesome, and it is mindful of one nāma or rūpa at a time. When there is mindfulness of the characteristic of a reality which appears direct understanding of that reality can gradually develop, until the truth of non-self can be realized.

We may have theoretical understanding of cittas which experience objects through the six doorways, but when there are conditions for the arising of sati it can be directly aware of the characteristic of the nāma or rūpa which appears. Theoretical understanding of realities is the foundation for the development of satipaṭṭhāna, but if there is no sati one's knowledge is only superficial; there is no development of paññā which directly penetrates the true nature of realities so that the clinging to the "self" can be eradicated. During this journey Khun Sujin stressed time and again the immense difference between theoretical understanding and direct understanding. We

[12] The Pāli term paṭṭhāna means foundation. Satipaṭṭhāna is the foundation of mindfulness.

[13] Mindfulness of the body, including all rūpas, mindfulness of feeling, mindfulness of citta and mindfulness of dhammas, including all dhammas which are not classified under body, feeling or citta. Thus, all objects of mindfulness are included in these four Applications of Mindfulness.

may have learnt that citta and cetasika are different. Citta is the leader in knowing an object and cetasikas have each their own characteristic and function. Citta and cetasikas arise together, but they have different characteristics. We may believe that we notice akusala citta with anger, but that is only thinking, and there is still an idea of “my anger”. Theoretical knowledge is not the direct understanding of realities. When paññā has been developed in vipassanā there can be direct understanding of the nature of citta and cetasika, of kusala and akusala, without an idea of self. It takes an endlessly long time, many lives, to develop satipaṭṭhāna, but even if there is a short moment of right understanding of nāma and rūpa we are on the right way.

Khun Sujin said that when we begin to develop understanding we should not think too much of the words satipaṭṭhāna or stages of insight, because then we are likely to cling to something for which there are no conditions yet. The objects of sati are ordinary realities of daily life like hearing, sound, hardness or feeling. We believe that we see this or that person, we are forgetful of the characteristic of visible object. What appears through the eyes is a reality, a rūpa, but it falls away very quickly. We recognize people, they seem to be there all the time, they do not seem to fall away. At such a moment we are thinking of concepts, and the concepts hide the paramattha dhammas. It seems that we hear the sound of hammering or the sound of birds because time and again thinking of conventional terms arises. In between thinking sati can arise and realize the characteristic of sound: that which can be heard, which has a degree of loudness. At that short moment there is no notion of people or things in the sound, sati can be directly aware of its characteristic. When sound appears there must also be the nāma which experiences it; if there were no citta how could sound appear? There could not be thinking of birds if there were no hearing of sound. We can learn the difference between the moment of sati and the moment of forgetfulness. We need to listen time and again so that we can understand the difference between these moments. Only in that way can we come to know the characteristic of sati and when we know this sati can be accumulated.

I said to Khun Sujin that I become nervous when I hear that we should know the difference between the moment of sati and the moment without sati. When we become nervous it shows that there is clinging to sati and then it cannot be developed. It is of no use to worry about lack of sati or to wonder what we can do so that sati can arise. Someone thought that considering the characteristics of impermanence, dukkha and anattā would be a favorable condition for the arising of sati. That may be only thinking with the desire for sati and this will not be helpful. Right understanding of the realities appearing through the doors of the senses and the mind-door should be developed until

paññā can realize the three characteristics of impermanence, dukkha and anattā. Merely thinking about birth, old age and death is not the realisation of the truth. The conditioned dhammas which arise fall away immediately but we should not have desire for the direct experience of the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa. This is only realized at the fourth stage of insight, which is the first stage of mahā-vipassanā (principal insight) [14]. We are forgetful of the nature of anattā of sati and of the stages of insight. When sati does not arise we cannot do anything to cause its arising. Jack said: ”Don't worry about sati, just develop understanding.” We should listen and consider the Dhamma and understand each time a little more what rūpa is and what nāma is.

Khun Sujin explained the difference between the moment there is sati and the moment without sati several times. We may touch different things which are hard, but the characteristic of hardness does not appear when there is no sati. The thinking of conventional truth comes in all the time when we touch a book, a glass or a table. When there are conditions for mindfulness, sati can be aware of the characteristic of hardness, but this moment is extremely short. When it has fallen away there may be thinking again. Because of saññā, remembrance, we think immediately of the thing we touch and do not consider the characteristic of hardness. Hardness is a characterstic of a rūpa which can be directly experienced through the bodysense. We do not have to think about it in order to experience it.

What appears through the bodysense is real but it falls away immediately. When sati arises, it may be aware of hardness, but only very shortly; at that moment understanding of that reality can develop so that it can be seen as just a kind of rūpa, and there is no notion of a glass or table which is hard. In this way we can learn that being aware of hardness is different from touching hardness without awareness. When sati arises the reality it is aware of is not different from what appears at this moment, but instead of forgetfulness there is sati which is non-forgetful of realities. We can begin to know that such a moment is a moment of sati. When we understand the characteristic of sati it can be accumulated. But when we cling to sati, when we try to have sati or make an effort to separate realities from concepts we are on the wrong way. When sati arises we cannot help having sati, it is anattā. A moment of sati falls away immediately and after that there may be doubt about realities or ignorance. We cannot help having doubt and ignorance, they are anattā.

Hearing Khun Sujin's explanation about sati only once is not sufficient; we should not expect to grasp the meaning of her words immediately. We have to

[14] The first stage is knowledge of the difference between nāma and rūpa; the second stage is knowledge of the conditions for nāma and rūpa; at the third stage paññā realizes the succession of nāma and rūpa as they arise and fall away very rapidly. At the fourth stage paññā realizes more clearly the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa, one at a time.

listen again and again and then gradually we can learn the difference between the moment of sati and the moment there is no sati. When sati is aware of a reality, there will be more understanding from moment to moment, we are on the right way.

Rūpas such as sound and hardness appear time and again in daily life, their characteristics can be directly experienced. Nāma is more difficult to understand, it is more subtle. We know in theory that when sound appears there must also be hearing which experiences sound, but it is difficult to know the true nature of hearing, to know it as an element which experiences, a kind of nāma, different from rūpa. We do not have to call it nāma, it has the function of experiencing an object. We are so used to taking it for "I", it is difficult to eradicate the idea of self from seeing or hearing. When we learn to be aware of the reality appearing at this moment there can be some understanding, even if it is very little. It is useful to know that only at the first stage of insight knowledge, vipassanā ñāṇa, the difference between the characteristics of nāma and of rūpa are clearly distinguished. Before that stage has been reached we cannot expect to understand nāma as nāma, completely different from rūpa. For example, at this moment there is seeing which sees visible object, but it is difficult to clearly distinguish the difference between seeing and visible object. When sati arises there can be a beginning of right understanding of nāma and rūpa.

Some people may wonder what the result is of listening to the Dhamma. I have been listening for more than thirty years and someone asked of what use this was to me. What has it brought me? I find that each moment of listening is most beneficial, since it brings a little more understanding. The Buddha has taught the Dhamma which was unknown to us before. The Dhamma is deep and difficult to understand. We should listen again and again and understand a little more. Thirty years is nothing compared to the aeons it took to bring me to the present day when I can hear the Dhamma again. It took the Bodhisatta an infinitely long time to accumulate understanding to the degree that he could become a Buddha. Each moment of accumulating understanding is beneficial, we do not have to think of the future. The reason that people become bored of hearing the same words about realities is that they hope for something, for the stages of vipassanā ñāṇa and for enlightenment. In the scriptures the person who has attained enlightenment, the ariyan, is called "someone who has heard much", in Pāli: bahussutta. He has not only listened much but he also has considered and investigated realities and he has developed satipaṭṭhāna. Thus, we should value each moment of listening, whatever we learn is very precious. I appreciate it immensely that Khun Sujin always brings the listener back to the present moment, when she for example says :

"We have intellectual understanding of nāma and rūpa, but what about this moment? There is the rūpa which is seen at this moment. There can be some understanding, even if it is very little. It is only visible object."

We read that nāma and rūpa are elements, dhātus, and that they can be classified as eighteen elements: the five rūpas which are the sense-organs, the five sense-objects experienced through these sense-organs, the five sense-cognitions, mind-element (mano-dhātu) [15], dhamma-dhātu (cetasika, subtle rūpas and nibbāna), mind-consciousness element (mano-viññāṇa dhātu, including all cittas except the sense-cognitions and mind-element). When we read this it is not too difficult to have theoretical understanding. But the Buddha taught the elements to help people to understand that they arise now, that they are anattā, that they have no owner and are beyond control. The whole of his teaching points to the development of satipaṭṭhāna, because what he teaches can be realized by paññā. We read in the "Dialogues of the Buddha" (III, no. 33, The Recital, Sangīti Sutta, Double Doctrines, 10) one sentence, full of meaning:

"Proficiency in elements and in understanding them".

The Commentary to this sutta, the "Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī", explains:

"Proficiency in elements". Eighteen elements, the element of eye, etc. ...the element of mind-consciousness. When it is said that there is with regard to these elements proficiency in the elements, understanding of them, it means that there is defining of the characteristics of these eighteen elements, paññā based on listening, on bearing in mind, paññā which comprehends and realizes (paṭivedha).

The Pāli term "paṭiveda" means the realization of the truth by paññā. There is a beginning of the realization of the truth when the stages of insight arise, but it is completed when enlightenment is attained: when the path-consciousness (magga-citta) arises which eradicates defilements and experiences nibbāna, and the fruition-consciousness (phala-citta) arises which is the result of the magga-citta. Paṭiveda is the result of the study of the Dhamma (pariyatti) and the practice of vipassanā (paṭipatti). The practice has to be in conformity with the study of the Dhamma. Through the practice we begin to verify what we learnt. Paṭiveda is the realisation of the truth of what we learnt.

[15] including adverting-consciousness and receiving-consciousness, arising wthin a sense-door process of cittas.

When we were in the Jeta Grove Khun Sujin stressed the difference between theoretical knowledge and the understanding acquired through satipaṭṭhāna. She explained this with reference to the knowledge of kamma and vipāka. In the scriptures we read about kamma and vipāka, for example in the "Gradual Sayings" (Book of the Tens, Ch V, § 8, Conditions). In this sutta we read that the monk should contemplate again and again ten conditions. One of these is the knowledge that kamma is one's own, kammassakata [16] ñāṇa. We read:

I myself am responsible for my deed, I am the heir to my deed, the womb of my deed, the kinsman of my deed, I am he to whom my deed comes home. Whatever deed I shall do, be it good or bad, of that shall I be the heir...

We may think about kamma and vipāka, but we cannot really grasp the deep meaning of the Buddha's teaching if we do not have right understanding of nāma and rūpa, acquired through satipaṭṭhāna. We may still have doubt about the truth of kamma and vipāka. When the first stage of insight arises paññā realizes the true nature of nāma and rūpa without thinking or naming realities. When seeing is the object of vipassanā ñāṇa, it is realized as the element which experiences, no self who experiences. It is conditioned, it is vipāka conditioned by kamma. Seeing is also conditioned by eyesense which is a rūpa produced by kamma [17], and by visible object. When there are no conditions dhammas cannot arise. Seeing can be realized as it is by paññā and then there is no need to think about it. Paññā immediately knows its nature as different from kusala citta or akusala citta. At this moment we have to think about realities and we think with an idea of self. We cannot clearly distinguish different cittas such as vipākacitta and akusala citta. We cannot imagine how paññā can directly understand the truth when we have not reached that stage yet. At the moments of vipassanā ñāṇa there is no self and no world full of people and things. Paññā realizes that seeing arises when there are conditions, that nobody can cause the arising of seeing. It realizes that there is no self who receives the result of kamma. Paññā can realize that whatever appears is only an element, no self. Khun Sujin explained that at each stage of vipassanā ñāṇa there is kammassakata ñāṇa, understanding of kamma and vipāka. At the second stage of vipassanā ñāṇa there is the direct understanding of the conditions for nāma and rūpa, but even at the first stage there is kammassakata ñāṇa when paññā realizes nāma as nāma and rūpa as rūpa, as non-self. At each subsequent stage of insight the understanding of the true nature of nāma and rūpa grows deeper.

[16] Saka means one's own. Kammassakata means: kamma which is one's own.

[17] Rūpas can be conditioned by four factors: by kamma, citta, temperature and nutrition. Rūpas such as the sense-organs are conditioned by kamma.

At this moment of seeing there can be the development of understanding of the element which experiences. There are the right conditions for the arising of seeing which experiences what appears through the eyes. It is real, it is dhamma. After that we may think about the colour which appears and we live again in the world of people and things. When paññā has been developed in vipassanā it will understand that there is no world, no thing, no doer of deeds and nobody who receives the results of deeds. We read in the "Sumaṅgala Vilāsīnī", in the Commentary to the Saṅgīti Sutta where it deals with higher sīla, adhisīla, higher citta, adhicitta (citta stands for concentration) and higher paññā, adipaññā [18], that the paññā which is kammassakata ñāṇa is "vipassanā adhipaññā", higher paññā of vipassanā. This shows us again that the deep understanding of kamma and vipāka is developed through satipaṭṭhāna.

Knowledge of kamma and vipāka relates directly to daily life, it is no theory. In the "Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint" (of the "Middle Length Sayings" I, no. 28) Sāriputta explains the four noble Truths, the five khandhas and the four great Elements of Earth, Water, Fire and Wind. Earth stands for solidity, Water for cohesion, Fire for temperature and Wind for motion. Solidity can be experienced through the bodysense as hardness or softness, temperature as heat or cold, motion as motion or pressure. Cohesion cannot be experienced through the bodysense, it can only be known through the mind-door. Time and again rūpas impinge on the bodysense but we are forgetful and we do not realize them as elements which are impermanent and not self. Sāriputta explains that if a monk is vexed he should have right understanding of realities. We read that Sāriputta said to the monks:

"Your reverences, if others abuse, revile, annoy, vex this monk, he comprehends: 'This painful feeling that has arisen in me is born of ear-contact, it has a cause, not no cause. What is the cause? Ear-contact is the cause.' He sees that ear-contact is impermanent, he sees that feeling... perception... the habitual tendencies are impermanent, he sees that consciousness is impermanent. His mind rejoices, is pleased, composed and is set on the objects of the element...."

The monk who is even-minded when he is annoyed has developed satipaṭṭhāna to the degree that he realizes "kammassakata ñāṇa". He does not think about other people who annoy him and about the unpleasant object he hears, he realizes directly vipāka which is conditioned by kamma. At that moment there is no world, no other people, no self.

[18] These will be explained in Ch 6.

We then read that Sāriputta said:

“If, your reverences, others comport themselves in undesirable, disagreeable, unpleasant ways towards that monk, and he receives blows from their hands and from clods of earth and from sticks and weapons, he comprehends thus: ‘ This body is such that blows from hands affect it and blows from clods of earth affect it and blows from sticks affect it and blows from weapons affect it. But this was said by the Lord in the Parable of the Saw: “If, monks, low-down thieves should carve you limb from limb with a two-handled saw, whoever sets his heart at enmity, he, for this reason, is not a doer of my teaching.” Unsluggish energy shall come to be stirred up by me, unmuddled mindfulness set up, the body tranquillised, impassible, the mind composed and one-pointed. Now, willingly, let blows from hands affect this body, let blows from clods of earth... from sticks... from weapons affect it, for this teaching of the Awakened Ones is being done.’... “

The monk who follows the Buddha’s teaching realizes without having to think about it that pain is vipāka conditioned by kamma. He can accept any kind of vipāka with evenmindedness.

So long as we confuse nāma and rūpa we are full of the idea of self, of “my mind” and “my body”. When we begin to be mindful of one reality at a time we are on the way to right understanding of nāma and rūpa. At the first stage of vipassanā ñāṇa nāma and rūpa are clearly distinguished from each other and only then their nature of non-self can be realized. But after this first stage paññā has to be developed further so that the subsequent stages can arise and the characteristics of impermanence, dukkha and anattā will be penetrated more clearly. As insight develops there will be more detachment from nāma and rūpa and eventually enlightenment can be attained.

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Chapter 4

Misconceptions

We have a distorted view of reality: what is impermanent we take for permanent, what is dukkha we take for happiness, what is non-self we take for self, what is foul we take for beautiful. Without the Buddha's teachings we would never know that we have a distorted view of reality, that we deviate from the truth. We have accumulated these ways of wrong conceiving for so long, that even when we study the Dhamma we are still inclined to deviate from the truth. These ways of conceiving phenomena in the wrong way are classified in the scriptures as "vipallāsa", as perversions or hallucinations. This was one of the subjects we discussed during our journey.

We read in "The Path of Discrimination" (Paṭisambhidāmagga, First Division, VIII, Treatise on Perversions) :

Bhikkhus, there are these four perversions of perception (saññā), perversions of cognizance (citta), perversions of view (diṭṭhi). What four? Bhikkhus, seeing what is impermanent as permanent is a perversion of perception, a perversion of cognizance, a perversion of view. Seeing the painful (dukkha) as pleasant is a perversion of perception, a perversion of cognizance, a perversion of view. Seeing what is not self as self is a perversion of perception, a perversion of cognizance, a perversion of view. Seeing the foul as beautiful is a perversion of perception, a perversion of cognizance, a perversion of view. These, bhikkhus, are the four perversions of perception, perversions of cognizanze, perversions of view.

We read further on that there are four non-perversions which are the opposites of the perversions. The perversions are deeply rooted and all of them arise so long as we have not attained enlightenment.

Four of the eight akusala cittas rooted in lobha, attachment, are accompanied by diṭṭhi. When there is diṭṭhi one clings with wrong view to the self, to what one believes is permanent, to what one takes for beauty and for happiness. Citta is the "leader" in cognizing an object, and the accompanying cetasikas also experience that object, but they have each their own function. Citta and the accompanying cetasikas condition one another. When citta is accompanied by diṭṭhi, the citta and the other cetasikas, saññā included, are conditioned by diṭṭhi: all of them are perverted by wrong view. Saññā [19] which accompanies each citta has the function of remembering or recognizing. Saññā which accompanies kusala citta is completely different from saññā

[19] Saññā is usually translated as perception.

which accompanies akusala citta. Also in the case of akusala citta without diṭṭhi, saññā which is perverted remembers wrongly, in a distorted way, and citta which is perverted cognizes the object in a distorted way.

The commentary to the "Path of Discrimination", the "Saddhammappakāsinī", explains that the perversions of saññā, citta and diṭṭhi have different strengths:

"... The perversion of saññā is the weakest in strength of all three. The perversion of citta has more strength than the perversion of saññā. The perversion of diṭṭhi has the greatest strength of all three."

This reminds us of the danger of wrong view. So long as we cling to the concept of self there cannot be the eradication of any defilement.

We have learnt from the Buddha's teachings that what we call a person are ever changing phenomena which arise and fall away, but instead of developing right understanding of nāma and rūpa we are often absorbed in concepts and we remember these with perverted saññā. Since we have accumulated wrong saññā for countless lives we are inclined to think of ourselves and others as persons who exist, at least during a life time; we fail to see that a person is only citta, cetasika and rūpa which do not last. This causes us many problems when we suffer from the loss of people who are dear to us through death. We have learnt through the teachings that all dhammas are anattā, but we forget that realities are beyond control, that they do not belong to us. Even when we develop vipassanā we can be lured by the wrong view of self : we believe that "we" can cause the arising of sati. We take what is dukkha for happiness, we cling to life, to all the sense objects we experience. Whatever we experience through the six doors falls away immediately, it is dukkha, but we believe that what we experience can bring us pleasant feeling. Pleasant feeling does not last, it is dukkha. What is foul or ugly we take for beautiful: we find our body beautiful and forget that in reality it is foul. It consists of rūpa elements which arise and fall away immediately; it is insignificant and not worth clinging to.

The Buddha taught the way to overcome the perversions, but they can only be eliminated very gradually. Insight has to be developed stage by stage until enlightenment can be attained. The characteristics of nāma and rūpa should be known as they are when they appear one at a time. At the first stage of insight nāma is clearly distinguished from rūpa. We cannot forego this stage, because so long as we are confused about the difference between nāma and rūpa, higher stages of insight cannot be reached, the impermanence of realities cannot be realized and the concept of self cannot be eradicated. There may be awareness of particular rūpas but not of the nāma which

experiences them. Then we are bound to take the experience for self. Or we may be merely thinking about nāma and rūpa and be forgetful to be aware of thinking. In that case we may take thinking for self.

We read in the "Dispeller of Delusion", the commentary to the "Book of Analysis", to the second Book of the Abhidhamma (Ch 7, Classification of the Foundations of Mindfulness) about reasons why the Buddha taught the four Applications of Mindfulness, namely of the body, of feeling, of citta and of dhammas. One of the reasons is as follows:

Or alternatively, it is in order to abandon the perversions (vipallāsa) of the beautiful, the pleasant, the permanent and self. For the body is foul, and herein beings are perverted (into regarding it as beautiful) by the perversion of the beautiful. The first foundation of mindfulness is stated in order to abandon that perversion by showing them the foulness therein. And as regards feeling and so on [20], taken as "pleasant, permanent, self" feeling is dukkha, citta is impermanent and dhammas are non-self. And beings are perverted as to these by the perversions of the pleasant, the permanent and self. The remaining three (Applications of Mindfulness) are stated in order to abandon those perversions by seeing dukkha etc. [21] therein. Thus, they should alternatively be understood to be stated as four, no less, no more, in order to abandon the perversions of the beautiful, the pleasant, the permanent and self.

The Buddha taught the "Application of Mindfulness of the Body" because we all cling to the body. We are so used to taking care of the body, to beautifing it or to adorning it, that we are ignorant of our clinging. When we read in the section on Mindfulness of the Body about the "Repulsiveness of the Body" we can be reminded that what we take for "our beautiful body" are only rūpa elements which are not beautiful, impermanent and do not belong to a self. We should not select one Application of Mindfulness in order to abandon a specific perversion. Any nāma or rūpa which appears can be object of understanding. If there is mindfulness only of rūpas of the body, but not of nāma, we shall not know rūpa as different from nāma and right understanding cannot develop. Citta is impermanent, it arises and falls away each moment. When seeing arises and then hearing, seeing has fallen away, because there cannot be seeing and hearing at the same time; each citta can experience only one object at a time. This can remind us of the impermanence of citta, but when it is said that the contemplation of citta can help one to abandon the perversion of permanence, it does not mean that mindfulness of rūpa, feeling or dhamma are excluded. Only through mindfulness of whatever

[20] Namely citta and dhamma.

[21] dukkha, impermanence and non-self.

reality appears, can the first stage of insight be reached, when nāma is realized as nāma and rūpa as rūpa. It is only at a higher stage of insight that the impermanence of realities can be penetrated.

We read in Khun Santi's lexicon about the abandoning of the perversions:

"The Buddha taught the four Applications of Mindfulness as a means to abandon the four perversions, but one should not fix one's attention on a specific perversion with the purpose to abandon it, because everybody who is not an ariyan is bound to have the four perversions. When satipaṭṭhana arises there can be awareness of a reality as anattā. Right understanding which results from listening to the Dhamma is accumulated and forms together with the other sobhana cetasikas included in saṅkhārakkhandha (the khandha of formations) the condition for the arising of right mindfulness. At that moment there will be mindfulness of anyone of the four 'Applications of Mindfulness'. Right understanding of realities which arises will gradually abandon the perversions until they are completely eradicated when the 'path-consciousness' (magga-citta) arises [22] ."

Right understanding resulting from listening is accumulated together with all the other good qualities, the sobhana cetasikas included in saṅkhārakkhandha (which khandha includes all cetasikas except feeling and saññā). In this way the right conditions are developed for right mindfulness which is aware of the nāma or rūpa which appears. Not only right understanding but all good qualities, such as mettā, generosity or patience are necessary to eliminate the clinging to the self.

We read in the "Path of Discrimination", in the section on the perversions, about the eradication of the perversions. The sotāpanna (streamwinner) who has attained the first stage of enlightenment, has not eradicated all the perversions. He has eradicated the perversion of saññā, citta and diṭṭhi which take what is impermanent for permanent. He has eradicated the perversion of diṭṭhi which sees what is dukkha as happiness, but the perversions of citta and saññā which see dukkha as happiness he has not eradicated. He has eradicated the perversions of saññā, citta and diṭṭhi which take what is non-self as self. He has eradicated the perversion of diṭṭhi which sees the foul as beautiful, but the perversions of citta and saññā which see the foul as beautiful he has not eradicated.

The sotāpanna has eradicated wrong view, he does not take realities for permanent or for self. He has realized that realities which arise have to fall away, that they are impermanent. What arises and falls away has no beauty, but, although he has realized the impermanence of realities, the clinging to

[22] At the different stages of enlightenment the perversions are subsequently eradicated.

what is beautiful has been deeply accumulated, he cannot abandon it yet. He sees beauty in what is foul, and thus, he has to continue to develop right understanding of citta, cetasika and rūpa, so that the perversion of seeing beauty in what is not beautiful is eradicated. This perversion has become attenuated at the second stage of enlightenment, the stage of the once-returner, sakadāgāmī, but it can only be completely eradicated at the third stage of enlightenment, the stage of the non-returner, anāgāmī. We read in the "Visuddhimagga" (XXII) that the perversions of saññā and citta finding beauty in the foul are eradicated at the third stage of enlightenment, the stage of the non-returner or anāgāmī. He does not cling to sense objects anymore, and thus he does not see the body as beautiful. But he still clings to rebirth which he considers as happiness instead of seeing it as dukkha. The "Visuddhimagga" states that the arahat has eradicated the perversions of saññā and citta finding happiness in what is dukkha. Only the arahat does not cling to rebirth, he has no inclination to consider it as happiness. Thus we see that it is extremely difficult to eradicate the perversions.

Defilements are deeply rooted and it is necessary to persevere in the development of understanding of the nāma or rūpa which appears now. The object of right understanding is the nāma and rūpa which appear in daily life, but as paññā develops, it understands more deeply their true nature. We have to follow the right Path so that realities will be understood as they are: impermanent, dukkha and not self. However, because of our defilements we are likely to deviate from the right Path, and then we shall not reach the goal. We are bound to forget that there is no one who develops right understanding.

We read in Khun Santi's lexicon, under "practice", about the practice of vipassanā:

"This is the moment when sati together with sampajañña (paññā) arises and is aware of the characteristic of nāma or rūpa. Then the truth is known that they are only nāma dhamma and rūpa dhamma, no being, no person, no self, no thing. Moreover, it is known that there is no person who practises, but that only sati sampajañña (sati and paññā) and the accompanying sobhana (wholesome) dhammas each perform their own function with regard to the practice. If there is right understanding of the nature of anattā of realities it will be the condition for the right practice and eventually for detachment from the clinging to the idea of self."

If we forget that sati is anattā it conditions wrong practice. There are three factors which can obstruct or slow down the development of vipassanā namely: craving, taṇhā, wrong view, diṭṭhi and conceit, māna. Even when we

listen to the Dhamma a great deal these three obstructions are bound to arise and slow down the practice.

There are many forms and varieties of thinking of ourselves. We may think of ourselves with clinging accompanied by wrong view, diṭṭhi, or without wrong view, or with clinging accompanied by conceit. There are eight akusala cittas rooted in attachment, lobha-mūla-cittas, of which four are accompanied by diṭṭhi and four are without diṭṭhi. When lobha-mūla-citta is accompanied by conceit, it is not accompanied by diṭṭhi. Thus, when we think of ourselves it may be with either one of the three factors which slow down the development of insight, namely, craving, wrong view and conceit.

We read in the "Middle Length Sayings" (I,"Discourse on Expunging") that Mahā Cunda asked the Buddha a question about wrong views and that the Buddha gave him explanations. The text states:

"Those various types of views, Lord, that arise in the world and are connected with theories of the self or with theories of the world, does there come to be ejection of these views, does there come to be renunciation of these views for a monk who wisely reflects from the beginning?"

"Those various types of views, Cunda, that arise in the world and are connected with theories of the self or with theories of the world- wherever these views arise and wherever they obsess (the mind) and wherever they are current, it is by seeing them with perfect wisdom as they really are, thus: 'This is not mine, this am I not, this is not my self,' that there is ejection of these views, that there is renunciation of these views...."

We read in the Commentary to this sutta, the "Papañcasūdanī", that to think, "this is mine" (etaṁ mama), is to be in the grip of craving (taṇhā); to think, "I am this" (eso aham asmi), is to be in the grip of conceit (māna); to think, "this is myself" (eso me attā), is to be in the grip of wrong view.

Thus we see that we may think of ourselves in many ways, not only with wrong view, but also with craving or conceit. Time and again the scriptures refer with the above quoted phrase to these three wrong ways of thinking [23]. We have deeply accumulated these tendencies and if we are ignorant of them they will prevent us from becoming freed from the cycle of birth and death.

The "Book of Analysis" (Ch 17, "Analysis of Small Items", in the Exposition of the Occurrences of Craving) gives an exposition of the different ways of craving in connection with "oneself". One thinks, for example, "I am", "I am such an one", "I am also", "I am otherwise".

We read about these different ways of conceiving:

[23] The commentary refers to them as the "papañca", which is translated as "diffuseness" or aberrations.

.... one gets the wish, "I am"; one gets the conceit, "I am"; one gets the wrong view, "I am"; when this happens there are these obsessions, "I am such an one" or "I am also" or "I am otherwise".

And how is there, "I am such an one? "I am a ruler" or "I am a Brahmin" or "I am a merchant" or "I am an artisan" or "I am a householder" or "I am an ascetic"....

The Commentary to the "Book of Analysis", the "Dispeller of Delusion" (under Behaviour of Craving) explains that there comes to be the thought "I am" depending on this internal pentad of khandhas (the five khandhas), due to taking it as a unit through craving, conceit and wrong view...

The Commentary explains that if one takes the five khandhas as a unit and thinks "such am I", this may be done without comparison or with comparison. We read in the Commentary:

Herein, as to without comparison there comes to be the thought: "Such am I" by making only one's own state the object without reference to any other aspect; among Khattiyas [24] and the like there comes to be the thought through craving, conceit and wrong view thus: "I am of this kind" is the meaning. This in the first place is the taking of it without comparison.

But the taking of it by comparison is of two kinds, as the same and as not the same....

All these ways of thinking occur time and again in our daily life. We may think of ourselves as being of such nationality, of having such status in society, of having had such education, with craving, conceit or wrong view: "I am such". As we just read in the Commentary, even when we do not compare ourselves with someone else, but only think, "I am such, I am of this kind", we may still have conceit, because we cling to the importance of our personality. We may cling to ourselves as belonging to a special group, a group of Dhamma students: "I am such". When we compare ourselves with someone else we may see ourselves as being equal, higher or lower: "I am also", or "I am otherwise". The Book of "Analysis" gives the examples: "As he is a ruler (Khattya), so also am I a ruler"... or "As he is a ruler, I am not a ruler in the same way". We may compare ourselves with others who have sati more often or who lack sati. Comparing is useless because sati is a type of nāma which arises because of its appropriate conditions.

The "Book of Analysis" points out that one may also think of oneself with

[24] The Khattiyas belonged to the warrior caste, the highest social rank. Kings belonged to this caste.

regard to the future: “I shall be”. One may also think: “I am eternal”, and that is the wrong view of eternalism, or “I am not eternal”, and that is, as explained here, the wrong view of annihilism: one believes to be annihilated, that there is no rebirth.

We should not try to pinpoint all these different moments, because they can only be known through the development of satipaṭṭhāna. So long as the difference between nāma and rūpa has not been realized by the insight knowledge of the first stage, it is not possible to clearly understand the different defilements which are anattā, which arise because of conditions. Defilements are nāma, but so long as we take nāma and rūpa as a unit, as a “whole”, it cannot be clearly understood what nāma is. However, studying details and considering them in daily life is useful, because we can be reminded of the many different ways of clinging to “our personality”, of thinking of ourselves. We may be inclined to think ,“He loses his temper, I am different”, or “His memory is weak, I am different” or “He practises vipassanā in the wrong way, I am different”. Instead of criticizing someone else we can see the urgency to develop the way leading to the eradication of the clinging to ourselves.

We may, without noticing it, cling to ourselves as a person who has sati: “I am such”, “I am the same”, “I am otherwise”. Or we conceive ourselves as a person who should reach the goal very soon, and then we shall certainly not reach it. Such ways of thinking can be a condition to engage in wrong practice and that is a form of diṭṭhi. We may hope for the arising of sati, we may wait for insight knowledge, vipassanā ñāṇa, or after someone has reached the first stage of vipassanā ñāṇa he may wait for the next ones. After a moment of sati one may cling to it and feel happy about it. One may be so keen to have sati that one clings to characteristics of paramattha dhammas which appear. For example, hardness appears and then one may cling to this characteristic and erroneously believe that that is awareness of hardness. If we cling to “my practice”, to a self who develops satipaṭṭhāna, we are on the wrong Path. There is no self who practises, only citta and cetasikas performing their functions. The conceiving of self is bound to be an obstruction time and again and only paññā which realizes such moments can be the condition to return to the right Path. We should not forget that right understanding should lead to detachment, but paññā must be very keen to realize even the more subtle kinds of akusala as not self. Māna can also obstruct the development of vipassanā. One may find oneself important and believe that one’s knowledge is already accomplished, that further study and consideration of realities is no longer necessary, or that one does not need to listen to someone else who explains the right Path.

The sotāpanna who has eradicated wrong view still thinks of himself with

clinging or conceit. At the subsequent stages of enlightenment clinging and conceit are attenuated, but only at the last stage, the stage of the arahat, all ways of misconceivings, even the most subtle, are eradicated. This can show us that there should be awareness and right understanding of all kinds of realities, including all ways of misconceiving, of thinking of ourselves, so that their true nature can be penetrated.

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Chapter 5

Purity of Sīla

The Pāli term sīla can mean: nature, character, habit or behaviour. Sīla can be kusala or akusala. In the scriptures sīla which is kusala, virtue or morality, has been classified in different ways. Sīla is expressed by deeds through body and speech. We may like to listen to the Dhamma and develop satipaṭṭhāna, but our behaviour through body and speech is not always in conformity with the Dhamma. Therefore, it is important to learn more about the different aspects of sīla. During our journey Khun Sujin stressed that for the understanding of the different subjects of the Dhamma we should always return to the paramattha dhammas which arise in our life: citta, cetasika and rūpa. In reference to sīla we should consider whether it is nāma or rūpa. Sīla is nāma, it is citta and cetasika. Sīla is not only abstention from evil, it is also the performance of wholesomeness through body and speech, such as helping others or paying respect to those who deserve respect. Also those who do not know the Dhamma can abstain from evil and perform wholesome deeds, they can have kusala sīla. However, if one has never heard the Dhamma one does not know in detail what akusala and what kusala is. The Buddha taught in detail about the citta which motivates speech and deeds, about the development of kusala and the way to eradicate even the most subtle kinds of akusala. If one does not develop satipaṭṭhāna there is still an idea of self who observes sīla, and then sīla cannot become purified. Because of knowledge of the Dhamma we have the means to know the different cittas which arise and which can motivate deeds through body and speech, and to develop the way leading to the eradication of the clinging to the self and all defilements.

We read in the "Path of Discrimination" (Treatise on Knowledge, Ch II, Virtue, 44, 45) :

What is virtue? There is virtue as volition (cetanā), virtue as cetasika, virtue as restraint, virtue as non-transgression.

How many kinds of virtue are there? There are three kinds of virtue (habit), profitable (kusala) sīla, unprofitable (akusala) sīla, indeterminate sīla (avyākata, neither kusala nor akusala).

From what does virtue originate? Kusala sīla originates from kusala citta, akusala sīla originates from akusala citta, indeterminate sīla originates from indeterminate citta.

With how many dhammas does sīla combine?

Sīla combines with restraint, sīla combines with non-transgression, sīla combines with the volition arising with restraint or non-transgression.

In the case of killing living beings... of taking what is not given... of sexual misconduct... of false speech... of malicious speech... of harsh speech... of gossip... of covetousness... of ill willl... in the case of wrong view, virtue is in the sense of restraint, virtue is in the sense of its non-transgression....

Abstention from akusala kamma is sīla. The term kamma is generally used for good deeds or bad deeds, but kamma is actually cetanā cetasika, volition or intention, which arises with each citta. Akusala cetanā and kusala cetanā can motivate deeds which are capable to produce their appropriate results in the form of rebirth-consciousness or vipākacittas which experience pleasant or unpleasant objects through the senses. During our discussions someone was wondering whether each akusala cetanā accompanying akusala citta produces result. When we like delicious food or enjoy ourselves watching a play there is lobha-mūla-citta, citta rooted in attachment. He was wondering whether the akusala cetanā accompaying the akusala citta could bring a result in the form of experiencing unpleasant sense objects. Khun Sujin explained that there are different degrees of akusala. Akusala cetanā can produce result when it has the intensity of a completed course of action, akusala kamma patha. If every akusala cetanā would be akusala kamma patha, then a baby lying on its back would already commit bad deeds which produce unpleasant results. Why would the Buddha teach about akusala kamma patha if there were no difference of intensity between akusala citta and akusala kamma? When we merely enjoy ourselves and do not harm someone else there is lobha-mūla-citta but not akusala kamma which can produce a result. However, the lobha-mūla-citta is accumulated and conditions the arising of lobha again, later on. After seeing or hearing lobha-mūla-citta arises very often, all day long, but we may not notice this. When we have no intention to harm someone else it is not akusala kamma patha. As we read in the quotation above from the “Path of Discrimination”, abstaining from the ten akusala kamma patha such as killing and the other akusala kamma patha, is sīla. For each kind of akusala kamma specific constituent factors make it into a completed course of action, kamma patha. For example, in the case of killing there has to be a living being, one has to be conscious of the fact that it is a living being, there must be the akusala citta which intends to kill, the act of killing and the death which follows [25]. A completed course of action can produce result by way of an unhappy rebirth or the experience of unpleasant objects through the senses.

Sīla is abstention from evil as well as observing of what is wholesome. With regard to abstention from evil, three cetasikas, which are called virati cetasikas, perform the function of abstention: abstinence from wrong speech

[25] See the commentary to the “Discourse on Right Understanding” (Middle Length Sayings, no 9) the “Papañcasūdanī”.

(vaci-duccarita virati), abstinence from wrong action (kāya-duccarita virati) and abstinence from wrong livelihood (ājīva-duccarita virati). Wrong livelihood is wrong speech or wrong action pertaining to our livelihood. It is impossible to abstain from akusala when virati cetasika does not arise. The three factors of the eightfold Path which are the sīla of the eightfold Path are these three virati cetasikas, which are the right speech, right action and right livelihood of the eightfold Path. They arise one at a time, because when there is opportunity for abstinence from wrong speech there is not at the same time abstinence from wrong action. When enlightenment is attained all three abstinences accompany the lokuttara cittas which experience nibbāna. They fulfill their functions as path-factors in cutting off the base of misconduct, according to the stage of enlightenment which is attained [26]. The classification about the origination of sīla reminds us that the citta is the source of restraint from evil and of the performing of what is wholesome. There is no self who observes sīla. As to indeterminate (avyākata) sīla, this is the sīla of the arahat, who has, instead of kusala citta, kiriyacitta (inoperative citta). He does not perform kamma which can produce rebirth, because he has reached the end of the cycle of birth and death.

The "Visuddhimagga" has classified wholesome sīla, virtue or moral conduct, in many ways. There is sīla for bhikkhus, for bhikkhunīs (nuns), for novices and for laypeople. Laypeople can observe five precepts: they can train themselves to abstain from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and the taking of intoxicants. Only those who have attained the first stage of enlightenment, the stage of the sotāpanna (streamwinner) have no conditions to transgress these precepts. Laypeople can also observe eight precepts. In addition to the five precepts there are three more including abstaining from eating after midday, from using high and soft beds, from using perfumes or adornments. Novices have to observe ten precepts.

The "Visuddhimagga", in the Chapter on Virtue, Sīla, gives the following fourfold classification of purity of sīla (pārisuddhi sīla):

the restraint of "Pāṭimokkha" including 227 rules of discipline for the monk,
the restraint of the sense faculties (indriya saṁvara sīla),
the purity of livelihood (ājīva pārisuddhi sīla),
the use of the four requisites of robe, dwelling, food and medicines, that is purified by reflection (paccaya sannissita sīla).

[26] Defilements are eradicated subsequently at the four stages of enlightenment. They are eradicated by the path-consciousness, maggacitta. The three virati cetasikas accompany the magga-citta and also the result of the magga-citta, the fruition-consciousness, phala-citta, which immediately succeeds the magga-citta. See for the abstinences which are lokuttara, Atthasālinī II, Part VIII, Ch 1, 219, 220.

With regard to the restraint of the Pāṭimokkha, we read in the "Book of Analysis" (Ch 12, 244):

Herein a bhikkhu dwells restrained and controlled by the Pāṭimokkha restraint, endowed with (proper) behaviour and a (suitable) alms resort, seeing peril in (his) slightest faults, observing (the precepts) he trains himself in the precepts....

As regards restraint of the sense faculties, there are different levels of restraint. We read in the "Middle Length Sayings" (no. 27, Lesser Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint) that the Buddha spoke to the brahman Jāṇussoṇi about the monk who has restraint as to the sense-faculties:

... Having seen visible object with the eye he is not entranced by the general appearance, he is not entranced by the detail. If he dwells with this organ of sight uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil unskilled states of mind, might predominate. So he fares along controlling it; he guards the organ of sight, he comes to control over the organ of sight....

The same is said with regard to the other senses and the mind-door. When awareness arises of visible object, sound or the other sense objects, there is no opportunity for the arising of akusala citta. At such a moment one does not harm anybody else through body or speech. When we understand which paramattha dhamma sīla is, namely, citta and cetasika, it will be clear that there can be sīla, even when one does not act or speak. Satipaṭṭhāna is the Buddha's teaching, and thus, satipaṭṭhāna should not be separated from the other ways of sīla the monk should observe: the restraint of the "Pāṭimokkha", the purity of livelihood and the use of the requisites which is purified by reflection. As to the monk's livelihood, he should not try to obtain the requisites by hinting, by scheming or hypocrisy. As to purification of the use of the requisites by wise reflection, he should not have attachment to them but see them as a means to protect his body and to continue his life as a monk, developing paññā which leads to arahatship. We read in the "Visuddhimagga" (I, 124) about the "reviewing" of the requisites by the monk:

Herein, reviewing is of two kinds: at the time of receiving requisites and at the time of using them. For use is blameless in one who at the time of receiving robes, etc., reviews them either as (mere) elements or as repulsive, and puts them aside for later use, and in one who reviews them thus at the time of using them.

Both the monk and the layfollower should train themselves in purity of sīla, but the monk's sīla is higher than the sīla of the layfollower, they cannot be compared with each other. Khun Sujin remarked that they are as different from each other as heaven and earth. The monk has left the household life with all its amenities in order to train himself to become an arahat, a perfected one. His lifestyle is like the arahat's. Thus, the monk must have purity of sīla, and if he commits a transgression he should make amends for it. If the transgression is very serious, such as killing, he is no longer a monk and he will be expelled from the order. However, also layfollowers can, in their own situation, apply what is laid down as the fourfold purification of sīla. The restraint of the senses is achieved by satipaṭṭhāna, and this can be developed by both monks and layfollowers. As regards purity of livelihood, also layfollowers should not be engaged in wrong livelihood, for example by bribery or deceit. As regards using the "requisites" wisely, this can also be applied by layfollowers. When one considers food as a medicine for the body it will help one not to indulge in overeating. It is natural that we are attached to clothing, food and home, but sometimes there can be conditions for kusala citta with wise reflection.

We read in the "Gradual Sayings" ("Book of the Tens", Ch V, § 8, Conditions) that the Buddha said:

Monks, these ten conditions must again and again be contemplated by one who has gone forth (from the home). What ten?

He must again and again contemplate this fact: I am now come to a state of being an outcast. And this: My very life is dependent on others. And this: I must now behave myself differently. And this: Does the self [27] upbraid me for (lapse from) virtue, or does it not? And this: Do my discerning fellows in the Brahma-life, after testing me, upbraid me for (lapse from) virtue, or do they not? And this: In all things dear and delightful to me there is change and separation. And this: I myself am responsible for my deed, I am the heir to my deed, the womb of my deed, the kinsman of my deed, I am he to whom my deed comes home. Whatever deed I shall do, be it good or bad, of that shall I be the heir. The nights and days flit by for me- who have grown to what? And this: In my void dwelling do I take delight or not? And this: Have I come by any superhuman experience, any excellence of truly ariyan knowledge and insight, whereon when questioned in my latter days [28] by my fellows in the Brahma-life I shall not be confounded?

These, monks, are the ten conditions to be again and again contemplated by one who has gone forth (from the home).

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[27] the citta.

[28] At the time of dying, according to the Commentary.

We read in the Commentary, the "Manorathapūraṇī", as to the monk's life being dependent on others, that this is because of his receiving of the four requisites. His livelihood should be pure and his conduct should be composed, different from laypeople. We read: "The monk who applies himself to the fourfold purity has developed vipassanā. He can reach arahatship". Vipassanā is the condition for the fourfold purity, satipaṭṭhāna should not be separated from the Vinaya. The purpose of sīla should not be pleasant results, such as rebirth in heaven, or honour, it should be the eradication of defilements. When someone applies himself to sīla without the development of satipaṭṭhāna there is an idea of self who does so, his sīla is not pure. Moreover, his sīla will not be steadfast; when he is in difficult circumstances he may not be able to observe sīla. The sotāpanna who has eradicated through satipaṭṭhāna the wrong view of self is steadfast in sīla, he cannot transgress the five precepts, he cannot commit akusala kamma which produces an unhappy rebirth.

When we understand which paramattha dhamma sīla is, citta and cetasika, it will be clear that the citta with mettā, loving kindness, is sīla. For the practice of mettā there should be awareness of the citta. When we develop mettā in daily life, we have goodwill towards our fellowmen, we do not harm them, and that is kusala sīla. Once, when someone behaved in an unpleasant way and I said to Khun Sujin, "She does not like us", Khun Sujin answered, "It does not matter, we like her," and that is the practice of mettā. We can apply this in any situation when people dislike us. What about our own citta? We are often too slow in our reactions to help others, but when satipaṭṭhāna arises there are conditions to move quickly in helping. During our journey one of the buses broke down and there was no seat left for us except in front near the driver. We had to sit near the foodboxes which broke so that bananas went all over the place and were crushed. Khun Sujin thought that we were unconfortable in the midst of all the commotion and she offered her seat; this was an example of helping without hesitation. This was an example reminding us that when there is an opportunity for kusala we should not wait, but perform it immediately.

It is difficult to practice sīla in every situation. When we have to endure unpleasant behaviour from others it is a test for our patience and endurance. We cannot choose the objects which appear through the six doors, sometimes they are pleasant, sometimes unpleasant. We may be disturbed by someone else, but a "person" is only an object of thinking. In reality there are only nāma and rūpa appearing one at a time. If there can be awareness when we are in difficult situations we can gradually learn that there is not this or that situation which seems to last, but only seeing which experiences visible object, hearing which experiences sound or thinking which thinks of concepts which

are not real. Realities arise because of their own conditions, they are beyond control and do not belong to a self. When there is awareness of one object at a time we attach less importance to certain situations. Only one object at a time through one doorway is experienced and it falls away immediately, it does not last. The six doors can be separated, not by "self", but by paññā.

Some people believe that one should first develop sīla, then samatha and after that vipassanā. When we read in the scriptures or the "Visuddhimagga" about the tripartite division of sīla, samādhi (one-pointedness or concentration) and wisdom, misunderstandings may arise. However, when we read about this subject we should carefully consider all the different degrees of sīla, samādhi and paññā which are implied. This division is not a rigid classification, but it is a systematic description of all levels of sīla, samādhi and paññā. We read, for example, in the beginning of the "Visuddhimagga" (Ch I, 1), the following quotation from the "Kindred Sayings"(I, the Tangle):

> When a wise man, established well in Virtue,
> Develops Consciousness [29] and Understanding,
> Then as a bhikkhu ardent and sagacious
> He succeeds in disentangling this tangle.

"Tangle" is used here in the sense of the "network" of craving. Craving is like a network of branches which are entangled. The "Visuddhimagga" describes first sīla, then the development of concentration and after that the development of right understanding. However, we should note that under sīla he describes not only sīla through bodily action and speech, but also sīla which is purity of citta, sīla which includes samatha and vipassanā. In Ch I, 19, the "Visuddhimagga" quotes the "Path of Discrimination", where we read about all the different levels of sīla. Included in sīla are the subduing of the defilements which are the "hindrances", the development of concentration and the different stages of jhāna, and also the stages of insight. We read, for example, about the stages of vipassanā:

> Through contemplation of impermanence in the case of perception of permanence... Through contemplation of dukkha in the case of perception of pleasure... through contemplation of not-self in the case of perception of self... through contemplation of dispassion in the case of delighting...virtue is in the sense of its restraint, virtue is in the sense of its non-transgression.

Dispassion is the result of vipassanā ñāṇa. We read further on that included in sīla are also the four stages of enlightenment up to arahatship

[29] Citta, which stands for concentration.

when all defilements are eradicated and there are no conditions for their arising again.

If someone believes that he, as a layman, should first keep the five precepts and that he then can develop samatha and after that vipassanā, he overlooks the fact that there is no self who can regulate this. The Buddha taught satipaṭṭhāna so that the wrong view of self can be eradicated. Through satipaṭṭhāna right understanding is developed and without satipaṭṭhāna sīla cannot become "well established". For the sotāpanna who has developed vipassanā, sīla is "well established". Through satipaṭṭhāna there can be training in "higher sīla" (adhi-sīla sikkhā), "higher citta" (adhi-citta sikkhā) and "higher wisdom" (adhi-paññā sikkhā). As to higher citta or concentration, this includes all levels of concentration, not merely jhāna. Concentration, samādhi, is the cetasika which is one-pointedness, ekaggatā cetasika. It arises with each citta and has the function of focussing the citta on one object. When satipaṭṭhāna arises, ekkagatā cetasika "concentrates" for that short moment on the nāma or rūpa which appears so that understanding of that reality can develop. In the development of samatha concentration is developed to a high degree so that jhāna can be attained, but this cannot be achieved without paññā which has right understanding of the citta and cetasikas which develop calm. In the "Visuddhimagga" all levels of concentration, jhāna included, are described, but this does not mean that everybody must develop jhāna in order to attain enlightenment [30].

Instead of thinking of classifications and names or thinking of a specific order as to the development of sīla, concentration and paññā, we can gradually develop understanding of the nāma and rūpa which appear and then there is training in higher sīla, higher citta and higher paññā. Even when attachment arises there can be mindfulness of it and at that moment one does not harm anyone; that is sīla. Or we may be inclined to engage in wrong speech, such as slandering or useless speech, but if sati arises and it is aware of nāma or rūpa, there are conditions to abstain from akusala. We speak many times in a day, but do we know whether our speech is kusala or akusala? We need to know the nature of citta so that there can be training in higher sīla.

We are inclined to observe sīla with an idea of self who has sīla. When satipaṭṭhāna is being developed sīla can become free from the wrong view of self. Then there will be purity of sīla, "sīla visuddhi" [31]. We read in Khun Santi's lexicon about sīla visuddhi:

"Purity of sīla is sīla which has reached a high degree of purity. When satipaṭṭhāna arises and there is awareness and understanding of the true nature of a characteristic of nāma or rūpa which is appearing, the doorways of

[30] This will be further explained in chapter 6.

[31] Suddhi means brightness, excellence, and the prefix vi has here an intensifying meaning.

the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind are guarded. At that moment there is no committing of evil through body or speech, because the six faculties are guarded by sati, (indriya saṁvara sīla [32]), there is restraint through the six doors. This is called purity of sīla, sīla visuddhi. It is purified and free from the wrong view of self because there is the understanding that there are only nāma or rūpa which are appearing."

Here we see again that for the development of sīla satipaṭṭhāna is essential. So long as one is full of the idea of self one may try to force oneself to restrain from akusala and observe sīla, but this is impossible when there are no conditions for citta and cetasika which observe sīla. Nāma, not self, observes sīla and satipaṭṭhāna is the right condition for purity of sīla. Someone who does not develop right understanding may have wholesome speech or help others, but there is still the idea of self who does so and there cannot be purity of sīla.

Sīla is one of the perfections the Bodhisatta fulfilled in order to attain Buddhahood. Sīla is a perfection when its purpose is the eradication of defilements. Then it is a way of kusala leading out of the cycle of birth and death. So long as defilements have not been eradicated we have to continue in the cycle of birth and death, and this means dukkha. We read in Khun Santi's lexicon about kusala which leads out of the cycle (vivaṭṭa gāmini [33] kusala):

"Kusala which leads out of the cycle means each kind of kusala which has the purpose of eradication of defilements. No matter one offers one ladle of rice gruel or one helping of boiled rice, if one sees the disadvantage of akusala and one will apply oneself to the development of kusala with right understanding in order to eradicate defilements, it is a perfection, it is right practice, namely, kusala which leads out of the cycle of birth and death."

We may want to observe sīla because we cling to the idea of being a "good person", of being esteemed by others, or because of other selfish motives, and in that case it is not the perfection of sīla. The perfection of sīla has detachment as its goal.

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[32] The five senses are classified as rūpas which are "indriyas", leaders, they are leaders each in their own field. Citta is manindriya, mind-faculty, the leader in its own field: it cognizes an object.

[33] vaṭṭa is cycle and vivaṭṭa means out of the cycle. Gāmini means going, leading.

Chapter 6

Samatha and Vipassanā

In Pokkhara we watched in the evening a performance of Nepali dances and afterwards we had a Dhamma discussion. We discussed the lobha, attachment, which arose while we were enjoying ourselves and laughing. We hear about the disadvantages of lobha, but there is no self who can eradicate it, only paññā. Khun Sujin remarked that it may be lobha which conditions our wish to eradicate defilements, but that the only way leading to its eradication is the development of paññā which knows the characteristic of lobha as non-self. The clinging to self is deeply accumulated and it is bound to arise even when one tries to develop paññā, when one wants to know the truth. Khun Sujin often reminded us that we should be truthful as to the realities which arise. We listen to the Dhamma and consider what we hear so that right understanding can grow and can begin to know characteristics of nāma and rūpa. When we watch a dancing performance, for example, there is sound of music, sound of people, sound of birds. Sound is just sound, its characteristic can be known when it appears through earsense. Thinking about the quality or the origin of the sound is another reality, different from hearing. Khun Sujin said that while we watch a performance we can see the amount of lobha we have, and that this is more useful than being ignorant of lobha. As paññā develops it can understand any kind of reality which arises, wherever we are and at any time. We should not try to be a different person, someone who has a great deal of kusala, before we develop satipaṭṭhāna. We should not try to have purity of sīla and purity of concentration before developing paññā. Someone remarked that "access concentration" (upacāra samādhi) arising shortly before jhāna, and absorption concentration (appana samādhi) arising with the jhāna-citta are the proximate cause of paññā. Khun Sujin answered that this is the case only for those who understand the development of satipaṭṭhāna. The aim of the Dhamma is detachment through right understanding of realities. Someone who attains jhāna without right understanding of nāma and rūpa will not reach the goal, he will continue to take the jhānacitta for self.

Before we can understand what it means that concentration, samādhi, is the proximate cause of paññā, we should know what samatha, tranquil meditation, is and what vipassanā, the development of insight is. They each have a different aim and a different way of development. But for both ways of development right understanding is indispensable. Some people believe that they can develop calm merely by sitting in a quiet place and concentrating on one object; they believe that if one just concentrates on something there will

be calm. Or they want to concentrate with the desire to become relaxed. Then their efforts are motivated by lobha, and this is wrong concentration, micchā samādhi. As Khun Sujin often stressed, we have to return to the paramattha dhammas in order to know what calm is and what concentration is. We have to know their different functions and we have to know when they arise, otherwise we shall only have a vague knowledge about tranquil meditation. Calm and concentration are different cetasikas, they arise because of the appropriate conditions and are non-self. There are two cetasikas which are calm: kāya passaddhi, calm of "body", and citta passadhi, calm of citta. The word "body" stands here for the mental body, namely cetasikas. Calm of citta conditions calm of the citta it accompanies, and calm of body conditions calm of the accompanying cetasikas. The cetasikas which are "calm" accompany each sobhana (beautiful) citta. Whenever we perform dāna or observe sīla these two cetasikas accompany the kusala citta, but we may not notice the characteristic of calm, because the kusala citta falls away very rapidly. Concentration or samādhi is ekaggatā cetasika, a cetasika arising with each citta. Its function is to cause citta to focus on one object. For example, when we see, hear or think ekaggatā cetasika causes citta to focus on the object. It accompanies kusala citta, akusala citta or citta which is neither kusala nor akusala. Thus, not any kind of concentration is kusala.

In samatha calm is developed by means of a suitable meditation subject. The "Visuddhimagga" (in chapters IV-XII) describes forty meditation subjects which can be the means to develop calm. Not just any other meditation subject can be used to this aim. For the development of calm sati and paññā (sati sampajaññā) are indispensable. There must be right understanding of true calm, which is freedom from defilements. Paññā must be very keen to know when akusala citta arises and when kusala citta. This is very difficult because cittas arise and fall away very rapidly. We may easily take for kusala what is akusala, especially when akusala is very subtle. If there is the desire to cause the growth of calm and concentration, one will not reach the aim. Among the meditation subjects are the recollection of the Buddha's pre-eminent qualities, mettā, loving kindness, or mindfulness of breathing. We may, in daily life, recollect subjects such as the Buddha's pre-eminent qualities or we may develop mettā. These subjects may condition some moments of calm with kusala citta, but that is not the development of tranquil meditation. In tranquil meditation paññā knows how calm can increase with a meditation subject, and as calm increases, also concentration grows. If one has accumulated inclination and skill for the development of calm, one may attain jhāna, absorption concentration. However, paññā must be very keen and many conditions have to be fulfilled. There are different stages of jhāna, and at each subsequent stage there is a higher degree of calm. At the

moments of jhānacitta there are no sense impressions and defilements are temporarily subdued, but they are not eradicated. There are stages of rūpa-jhāna, material jhāna, where the meditation subjects are still dependent on materiality, and there are stages of arūpa-jhāna, immaterial jhāna, where the meditation subject is no longer dependent on materiality. Arūpa-jhāna is more refined than rūpa-jhāna. One should acquire "mastery" (vasī), great skill in jhāna, if one wants to develop higher stages of jhāna. We read in the "Visuddhimagga" (IV, 131) that one should have "mastery" in adverting to the jhāna, in entering it, in determining its duration, in emerging from it and in reviewing it. Even before the Buddha's time people developed tranquil meditation to the stages of rūpa-jhāna and arūpa-jhāna in order to temporarily subdue defilements, but these could not be eradicated. The Buddha found the Path leading to the complete eradication of defilements, and this is the development of satipaṭṭhāna. The objects of satipaṭṭhāna are paramattha dhammas, they are any nāma or rūpa which is appearing at the present moment; one does not select any special object. The aim of the development of satipaṭṭhāna is eradication of clinging to the self and eventually of all defilements.

Some people wonder whether it is necessary first to develop samatha and after that vipassanā. The Buddha did not set any rules with regard to samatha as a requirement for the development of insight. Individual inclinations are different. It depends on one's accumulated inclinations whether one applies oneself to tranquil meditation or not. Some people developed both samatha and vipassanā, but for the attainment of enlightenment they still had to develop right understanding of all nāmas and rūpas. They had to acquire the "masteries", so that they at any time could enter jhāna or emerge from it, and after having emerged from jhāna they could be mindful of realities, including the jhānacitta and accompanying jhāna-factors which are cetasikas. Otherwise they would take the jhānacitta for self. If people had great skill in jhāna and could be aware of the jhānacitta, jhāna was a foundation for the development of insight.

Some people wonder why, in the "Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta" (Middle Length Sayings I, no. 10) "Mindfulness of Breathing" is included under the section "Mindfulness of the Body". Does this imply that it is necessary for the development of vipassanā to be mindful of breathing? It is an object of samatha and an object of vipassanā. As an object of samatha it is one of the most difficult meditation subjects. If one tries to concentrate on breath without right understanding of this subject there will be clinging instead of calm. Breath is a rūpa conditioned by citta, and it can appear where it touches the nose tip or the upperlip. Breath is very subtle and the "Visuddhimagga" explains (VIII, 211):

... But this mindfulness of breathing is difficult, difficult to develop, a field in which only the minds of Buddhas, “Silent Buddhas”[34] and Buddha’s sons are at home...

Buddha’s sons are disciples who were endowed with great wisdom and special qualities (mahā-purisas, or “great men”). Thus, mindfulness of breathing as a meditation subject of samatha is not suitable for everybody.

Khun Santi explains in his lexicon the difference between mindfulness of breathing as a subject of samatha and as an object of vipassanā. We read about mindfulness of breathing as an object of vipassanā:

“The paramattha dhamma which is breath is the object. In the ‘Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta’ the subject of breath has been shown under the section of ‘Mindfulness of Body’, because it regards the body, it is a reality which is a condition for the body. We used to take breath as mine, to think that it is ‘I’ who is breathing. However, when satipaṭṭhāna arises it knows the characteristic of what is appearing, the Element of Earth, the Element of Fire or the Element of Wind, which impinges on the body. They are the characteristics of softness, heat or motion, which may appear at the nose tip or upperlip, just any of those characteristics. We may begin to know, we may gradually understand that it is only a reality which has this or that characteristic, that it is a rūpa element which does not know an object. In this way the wrong understanding that it is me who is breathing or my breath can be eliminated. When sati arises one does not pay attention to the place where breath contacts, one only knows the reality which is appearing. Sati which accompanies right understanding arises because of the appropriate conditions, namely, listening until there is right understanding. There is no need for a special preparation, no need to fix one’s attention beforehand, and there should not be the desire that sati must arise. Sati only arises now and then. If there is right understanding, satipaṭṭhāna will be aware of different objects appearing through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door, until it can be aware of whatever object appears. Thus, one will not just fix one’s attention on breath which appears through the bodysense. Gradually the truth of anattā will be penetrated and there will be a clearer understanding of realities as they are, so that paññā can become more accomplished. Then the stages of insight knowledge can be reached and eventually the path-consciousness and fruition-consciousness will arise when enlightenment is attained. However, this takes a long time, not just one life. Paññā must be developed on and on by listening, considering and investigation, but we

[34] Silent Buddhas or Pacceka Buddhas have found the Path all by themselves, but they do not have accumulated the wisdom to the extent that they can teach the Path to others.

should not have any expectation of result. Expectation is clinging, tanhā, which together with conceit, māna, and wrong view, diṭṭhi, are factors which slow down the development of paññā."

From this quotation we see that the method and aim of vipassanā is different from the method and aim of samatha. In vipassanā no preparation is needed, there is awareness of whatever reality appears, be it kusala, akusala, pleasant or unpleasant. From the beginning we should remember that there is no self who can do anything to have more awareness and understanding. We should not try to change our character and become a better person with the aim to develop right understanding. It is right understanding itself which has the function to eradicate akusala.

We should not try to be aware of breath, because it is very subtle. It is tangible object, conditioned by citta, but it is already very difficult to be aware of other kinds of tangible objects such as hardness of the different objects we touch, and therefore, why should we try to be aware of breath which is so subtle?

People in the Buddha's time who were highly gifted, who could become arahats with special distinctive qualities (mahā-purisas), could develop mindfulness of breath as a subject of samatha and vipassanā. We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (V, Mahā-vagga, Book X, Kindred Sayings about In-breathing and Out-breathing, Ch I, § 8, The Lamp) that the Buddha, while he was at Sāvatthī said to the monks: "Monks, intent concentration on in-breathing and out-breathing, if cultivated and made much of, is of great fruit, of great profit." He then explained how to be aware of breath and to attain calm by means of this meditation subject [35]. The person who develops this subject can attain all stages of rūpa-jhāna and arūpa-jhāna, and also "extinction" (nirodha). This is temporary extinction of consciousness, which can only be attained by non-returners and arahats who have developed all stages of rūpa-jhāna and arūpa-jhāna.

The Commentary to this sutta , the "Sāratthappakāsinī" explains about the benefits of "Mindfulness of Breath". We read:

"The monk who needs to have superpowers which are of the ariyan, the four stages of rūpa-jhāna, the four stages of arūpa-jhāna and the attainment of "extinction", must be interested in thorough concentration on the the subject of breath... "

The commentary explains that when this subject has been developed in all ways, all these benefits will occur to the meditator.

[35] See the "Visuddhimagga" VIII, 145- 245, which gives a detailed explanation.

All arahats have eradicated the defilements, but they have different abilities, different talents. Some had superpowers which are "worldly" (lokiya, not lokuttara) and lokuttara (supramundane) [36]. Thus, we see that great benefits of "Mindfulness of Breath" occur to very special persons, to arahats who are highly gifted and have distinctive qualities. In our time the teachings are declining and there are in the human world no more arahats. The sutta and the commentary which I mentioned can remind us that "Mindfulness of Breath" cannot be properly developed by ordinary people.

In the Buddha's time people who had accumulated great skill for jhāna developed samatha to the degree of jhāna, and also developed vipassanā, so that they could attain enlightenment. However, there were also many people who only developed vipassanā and then attained enlightenment. They are called people who developed "dry insight", sukkha vipassanā. In the "Designation of Human Types" (Puggalapaññatti, the fourth Book of the Abhidhamma) individuals with different inclinations have been described. We read in the "Table of Contents" about the "Grouping of Human Types by One", about "one who is emancipated at times (samayavimutto)" and "one who is emancipated not (only) at times (asamayavimutto)". The Commentary, the "Pañcappakaraṇatthakata" explains that "emancipated at times" applies to those who have attained to the three lower stages of enlightenment. They have not attained the full emancipation of arahatship. The Commentary states that "emancipated not at times" (the opposite of "at times") applies to arahats who are "sukkhavipassaka", who only practised dry insight, and did not develop jhāna. We read in chapter I about those who are "emancipated not (only) at times": "Indeed, all persons who are ariyans (noble or elect) are so emancipated in matters of the higher emancipation." One can become enlightened, even to the stage of the arahat without having developed jhāna.

We also read about someone who is of "perturbable nature" (kuppadhammo) and someone who is of "imperturbable nature" (akuppadhammo). The person of "perturbable nature" is not steadfast, he has dhammas which can decline. Among this group are those who have attained the different stages of jhāna, but who have no masteries (vasīs). They can attain jhāna with difficulty, they cannot enter or emerge as they wish. Their skill in jhāna can decline. Those who are of "imperturbable nature" are anāgāmīs and arahats who have mastery in jhāna, and moreover, all ariyans are "imperturbable in matters of ariyan emancipation". Thus, the ariyans of the four stages of enlightenment are included, no matter they have "mastery" in jhāna or not. The ariyan freedom cannot decline, the defilements which have been eradicated cannot return. This reminds us of what is really essential.

[36] Abhiññā, including magical powers such as walking on water, divine ear, penetration of other people's minds, divine eye, remembrance of former lives, eradication of all defilements.

We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (III, Khandhā-vagga, Kindred Sayings on Elements, Middle Fifty, Ch 4, § 88, Assaji) about a monk who was too sick to develop Mindfulness of Breathing and attain jhāna. Khun Buth Sawong from Cambodia, who can recite many suttas by heart, drew our attention to this sutta which shows that it is not necessary to develop jhāna in order to be able to attain enlightenment. We read that when the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha, he visited the venerable Assaji who was sick. They had the following conversation:

... "Formerly, lord, I kept trying to calm down my sickness, but I am still much troubled by my breathing. I cannot win balance of mind. But though I cannot win balance of mind, I say to myself:- 'Yet I do not fall away.'"

"Those recluses and brahmins, Assaji, who deem balance of mind as all in all, they who reverence balance of mind,-when they cannot win that balance of mind, say to themselves: 'May we not fall away!'

Now as to this, what do you think, Assaji? Is body permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, lord."

"So it is with the other factors, and consciousness...

Wherefore he who sees this... knows:'... for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.'

If one feels a pleasant feeling... a painful feeling... a neutral feeling, he knows it is impermanent, he knows it as not clung to, he knows it has no lure for him.

If he feels a pleasant feeling... a painful feeling... a neutral feeling, he feels unattached. If he feels a feeling that his bodily powers have reached their end, he knows that he so feels. If he feels a feeling that life has reached its end, he knows that he so feels. He knows that when body breaks up, henceforth, when life has run its course, all that he has felt, all that had a lure for him will grow cold."

Through the development of right understanding of the five khandhas, that is, of all nāma and rūpa within and around ourselves, enlightenment can be attained and eventually arahatship can be reached. There can be awareness of seeing, visible object, feeling or thinking right now, why should we strive to reach jhāna first?

Sammā-samādhi, right concentration is one of the factors of the eightfold Path. It performs its function of focussing on the nāma or rūpa which is the object of right understanding, sammā-diṭṭhi. At the same time sammā-sati is mindful of that object, right thinking, sammā-sankappa, "touches" the object so that sammā-diṭṭhi can understand it, and right effort, sammā-vāyāma, is

the effort or energy for right understanding. These five cetasikas among the eight factors perform their functions when right understanding is being developed. The three factors of right speech, sammā-vācā, right action, sammā-kammanta, and right livelihood, sammā-ājīva pertain to the sīla of the eightfold Path. There is no self who can try to concentrate on nāma and rūpa, right concentration is ekkaggatā cetasika performing its function. We should remember that the factors of the eightfold Path are cetasika paramattha dhamma, non-self.

The "Visuddhimagga" (XI, 121) explains that one of the benefits of the development of concentration is serving as the proximate cause for insight. When one reads this one may believe that everybody should develop jhāna as a condition for insight, but, as we have seen, it depends on one's accumulated inclination whether one will develop jhāna or not. Moreover, also when one does not develop jhāna, sammā-samādhi is the proximate cause of paññā, since it performs its function while it accompanies paññā. As right understanding develops sammā-samādhi develops as well, and when lokuttara citta arises at the moment of enlightenment, sammā-samādhi has the degree of appanā-samādhi, absorption concentration. Its strength can be compared with absorption concentration which accompanies the jhānacitta of the first stage of jhāna. However, its object is not a meditation subject of samatha, but it is nibbāna. It has this strength of concentration because of the right conditions, namely the development of vipassanā to the degree that enlightenment can be attained. Samādhi which accompanies jhānacitta in samatha is not the proximate cause of paññā of the eightfold Path. It is right concentration, but not right concentration of the eightfold Path. The aim of samatha is not seeing nāma and rūpa as impermanent, dukkha and non-self. We should consider what the goal is in our life: the understanding of this moment of seeing, hearing, thinking, visible object, sound or any other paramattha dhamma which appears now.

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Chapter 7

Paying Respect

When we visit the holy places and pay respect by chanting and going around the Bodhi-tree and the stupas, we can be reminded of the Buddha's excellent qualities: his wisdom, his purity and his compassion. Out of compassion he taught us the Dhamma he had realized himself when he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree. He is our teacher in the highest sense, he excels all other teachers in wisdom, purity and compassion. Khun Santi writes in his lexicon about the Buddha as the pre-eminent teacher (parama satthā):

"'Pre-eminent Teacher' refers to the Exalted One, the Buddha who accumulated the perfections during four incalculable periods and a hundred thousand aeons in order to become an omniscient Buddha, the teacher of devas and men. He taught others so that they could also know the truth which can be verified by paññā , understanding of what appears through each of the six doorways. In this way the wrong view can be eliminated which takes realities for beings, people and "self", and the truth of realities can be fully penetrated as the different stages of enlightenment are attained."

We should listen to the Dhamma over and over again with the aim to have more understanding and to verify the truth of the teachings ourselves. If we do not listen, study and consider the Dhamma, we may believe what the Buddha taught but we shall not be able to directly experience the truth of the Dhamma.

The Buddha attained enlightenment, but we cannot understand what enlightenment means so long as we are only ordinary people who have not attained enlightenment themselves. We cannot fathom the Buddha's pre-eminent qualities, but we can begin to have at least some understanding of them by the development of satipaṭṭhāna, which is his teaching. There are realities appearing through the six doorways now, and sati can gradually begin to be aware of one reality at a time.

In the scriptures we often find the epithet of the Buddha "Tathāgata", which is full of meaning. The Buddha used this epithet frequently in reference to himself. In the Commentary to the "Middle Length Sayings" (no. 1, the Discourse on the Synopsis of Fundamentals), the"Papañcasūdanī", Buddhaghosa elicited the multiple implications of this title [37]. When we read about the derivations of this term and the word associations, we should

[37] I used the translation by Ven. Bodhi in his translation of "The All-Embracing Net of Views", the Brahmajāla Sutta, B.P.S. Kandy, 1978.

remember that Buddhaghosa did not give a linguistic exposition, but that he wanted to explain the Buddha's pre-eminent qualities. We should not cling to conventional terms but try to understand what they express. The subcommentary to this commentary states that "the word 'Tathāgata' contains the entire practice of the Dhamma as well as all the qualities of a Buddha."

We read that the Buddha is called "Tathāgata" because he has "thus come" (in Pāli: tathā means "thus", and āgato means "come"). He has come in the same way as the previous Buddhas, through the same aspiration and the fulfilling of all the "perfections". He relinquished limbs, eyes, wealth, kingdom, children and wife. He developed the factors leading to enlightenment, including the four satipaṭṭhānas and the eightfold Path, just as previous Buddhas.

The perfections (pāramīs [38]) lead across the sea of "saṁsāra" (the cycle of birth and death) to the other shore, to nibbāna. The perfections are: generosity (dāna), sīla, detachment (nekkhamma), energy (viriya), paññā, patience (khanti), truthfulness (sacca), determination (adiṭṭhāna), mettā and equanimity (upekkhā). All ten pāramīs are needed, but paññā is needed above all; the other nine pāramīs cannot develop without paññā, they are the "attendants" of paññā. In the "Commentary to the "Cariyāpiṭaka" (Basket of Conduct), the "Paramatthadīpanī" (Clarifier of Sweet Meaning), wisdom is called the chief cause for the practice of the other pāramīs, the cause for the purification of all the pāramīs. When satipaṭṭhāna is developed and there is awareness of kusala, paññā can know it as non-self. The perfection of truthfulness or sincerity has many aspects. Because of truthfulness one develops kusala not for one's own gain or advantage, but only with the aim to have less defilements. Without truthfulness defilements cannot be eradicated. The perfection of detachment, nekkhamma, does not only mean detachment from the household life, but detachment from the clinging to self and the abandoning of all defilements. In this sense we can understand the words of the Commentary to the "Saṇgīti sutta" (The Recital, Dialogues of the Buddha III, no. 33), the "Sumaṇgala Vilāsinī", that all kusala dhammas are the "element of detachment", nekkhamma dhātu. However, if we try to have kusala with the idea of self, there is no detachment. Khun Sujin reminded us that we think mostly of ourselves, of our own gain. The clinging to the self is bound to arise time and again, and therefore the development of satipaṭṭhāna is essential, it should be developed together with the perfections. Khun Sujin stressed that we should not cling to the conventional terms of the pāramīs, we do not have to think that we shall develop dāna, sīla or any of the other pāramīs. Then there would again be an idea of self who tries to do something. If we keep in mind that the goal is detachment, we can perform any kind of

[38] The Pāli term para can mean: further, beyond.

kusala for which there is an opportunity, depending on conditions. We develop the pāramī of paññā when we listen to the Dhamma, not in order to get something for ourselves, but in order to have more understanding of the reality appearing at this moment. But the clinging to self is bound to arise, even while we are considering and investigating what we heard. Khun Sujin stressed that it is not self who considers the Dhamma. It is of no use to wait for the arising of sati, or to try to do different things first to cause its arising, then we forget again that sati is anattā. We read in the Commentary to the Cariyā Piṭika that "the destruction of self-love and the development of love for others are the means for the accomplishments of the pāramīs." When we remember the goal and perform any kind of kusala, be it dāna, sīla or study of the Dhamma, it is the way to accumulate the perfections.

We read further on in the "Papañcasūdanī" that the Buddha is called "Tathāgata" because he has "thus gone" (in Pāli: tathā gato. Gato means "gone") As soon as he was born he went the same way as the previous Buddhas: his feet were planted evenly on the ground, and, facing north, taking seven steps, he surveyed all the directions, saying, "I am the foremost in the world. I am pre-eminent in the world. I am supreme in the world. This is my last birth. There is now no renewal of existence." The Commentary states that his going foretold his numerous achievements of spiritual distinction. When he surveyed all the directions it foretold his unobstructed omniscience, and when he uttered the words, "I am foremost in the world...", it was the foretoken of "his setting in motion the supreme, irreversible Wheel of the Dhamma". The term "gone" should be seen in the sense of bodily movement and in the sense of movement of knowledge. The Commentary explains further on that he, just as previous Buddhas, subdued the defilements which are the hindrances by the stages of jhāna, that, by the eighteen principal insights (mahā-vipassanā ñāṇa) he abandoned the deluded perceptions of permanence, pleasure, self, and the other defilements. He attained the four stages of enlightenment and eradicated subsequently all defilements until he reached arahatship.

He is called the Tathāgata because he has come to the real characteristic (of dhammas) (tathalakkhaṇaṁ āgato. Lakkhaṇa means "characteristic"). He has come to the real characteritics of all dhammas, such as the elements, the khandhas, the jhānafactors, all the factors leading to enlightenment and the factors of the "Dependent Origination" [39].

He realized true dhamma. Whatever is real appears through the six doors and its true nature can be known. Realities appear at this moment and through awareness and right understanding we can verify the truth.

Further on we read that he is called the Tathāgata because he has

[39] The dependently arisen factors which cause the cycle of birth and death, beginning with ignorance.

awakened to real dhammas in accordance with actuality, because he is a seer of the real, because he is a speaker of the real, because he practises what he teaches and that he is called the Tathāgata in the sense of surpassing. He surpasses all beings with regard to virtue and wisdom, he is unequalled.

He is a speaker of what is real, because the whole contents of the Dhamma he taught, contained in the scriptures, is perfect in all its modes, irreproachable in meaning and in phrasing. He practises what he taught. Our actions should be in conformity with the Dhamma, we should apply the Dhamma in our daily life.

We read in the "Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta" (Dīgha Nikāya, no. 16) that the Buddha came to his last resting place, the Sāla Grove of the Mallas and lay down between the twin Sal trees which dropped their blossoms in worship of the Buddha. Celestial coral-flowers and sandalwood powder rained down on his body and heavenly music could be heard, out of reverence for the Buddha. We read that the Buddha said to Ānanda [40] :

Yet not thus, Ānanda, is the Tathāgata respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped and honoured in the highest degree. But Ānanda, whatsoever bhikkhu or bhikkhunī, layman or laywoman abides by the Dhamma, lives uprightly in the Dhamma, walks in the way of the Dhamma, it is by him that the Tathāgata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped and honoured in the highest degree. Therefore, Ānanda, "Abide by the Dhamma, live uprightly in the Dhamma, walk in the way of the Dhamma!"- thus should you train yourselves.

During our journey we received many helpful reminders for the application of the Dhamma, from Khun Sujin and also by the example of our friends. One of them who practised generosity by offering tea to others at a small shop near the road, said that during this trip he gained more confidence in the Dhamma, and this happened to all of us. By listening to the discussions and considering what we heard understanding develops, and this is beneficial, even if there is just a little more understanding. I asked one of our friends after an exhausting day how he found the trip. He answered: "I receive something every day." He found every day beneficial. Someone else was helping continuously, she never stopped. In the diningroom she peeled apples for others and did not mind that her own food became cold. Her example of truly non-stop helping in many ways impressed me. Thus, there were many opportunities for appreciation of other people's kusala, which is a form of dāna, anumodana dāna. Khun Sujin explained the Dhamma with the greatest patience and mettā, both to beginners and to those who had studied more.

[40] I am using the translation of B.P.S. Kandy, Wheel Publication no. 67- 69.

She gave us practical advice for the application of the Dhamma, as she always does. I appreciate it especially that she stressed time and again that what we learn from the teachings is not theory, that it concerns realities. For each subject of the Dhamma we have to return to paramattha dhammas, we have to know precisely whether something is citta, cetasika or rūpa. She repeated many times that we listen to the Dhamma in order to understand the reality appearing at this very moment.

She gave us the advice to "follow the stream". She said, "Just follow the stream in your life, whatever comes." We have to follow whatever occurs because of conditions, then we shall understand the meaning of anattā. This can condition awareness of nāma and rūpa. Like each journey in India, we had to suffer hardship: the road was bad at times, we were in the bus for a great length of time, we had some days of rain, and there were other discomforts like a fever or a cold. No matter what we see, hear or experience through the bodysense, there are only nāma and rūpa. We may say to ourselves, "there are only nāma and rūpa", but their different characteristics should be known when they appear one at a time. Nāma is different from rūpa, and only when there is mindfulness of them, understanding of the difference between their characteristics can develop. We should not try to control realities which are conditioned already, but just follow them. This is a test for our understanding. We may think of the need for the perfections of energy and patience, but there may be clinging to a self who wants to have them. Khun Sujin said that they arise already because of conditions, and that there is no need to remind ourselves of them. We never know what will happen. One of our friends was so ill that she could not continue the bus trip and had to take a plane. It was unavoidable that this meant a delay for all of us. But if we "follow the stream" in difficult situations or in the company of people who cause us trouble, it will help us to see anattā.

Khun Sujin reminded us that we may say, "everything is anattā", but that this does not mean that we understand anattā. We should consider what exactly is anattā: the nāma or rūpa appearing at this moment. Sound which appears does not belong to anyone, it arises because of its own conditions and it is beyond control. When hearing arises it is beyond control, we cannot help hearing when there are conditions for hearing. Only through mindfulness of nāma and rūpa the truth of anattā can be penetrated. The Buddha's teaching of anattā is not theory, it relates to this very moment.

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